

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
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WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115

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March 7, 2025

The Honorable Brett Guthrie
Chairman
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Earl “Buddy” Carter
Chairman
Subcommittee on Health
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Gary Palmer
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairmen Guthrie, Carter, and Palmer:

We are writing to request that the Committee convene an urgent hearing with Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. of the Department of Health and Human Services to evaluate the Trump Administration’s response to the developing measles outbreak, which has now spread to nine states.

As of the last update by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on February 28, 2025, there have been 164 known cases of measles in the United States, including 55 in children under the age of five.¹ That is nearly triple the number of cases reported in 2023, and, in just over two months, nearly half the total number of cases in all of 2024.² Last week, the

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Measles Cases and Outbreaks* (Feb. 28, 2025) (https://www.cdc.gov/measles/data-research/index.html#cdc_data_surveillance_section_10-measles-cases-in-2025).

² *Id.*

country experienced its first measles fatality in a decade, when a school-aged unvaccinated child, died of measles in a children’s hospital in Lubbock, Texas.³ An unvaccinated adult who was infected with measles recently died in New Mexico.⁴ Overall, 32 patients, including 26 children, have been hospitalized.⁵

This outbreak signals a colossal lapse in our public health defenses, including vaccine uptake. Measles vaccines have been commercially available for over 50 years.⁶ A single dose of that vaccine is 93 percent effective against measles, and that figure jumps to 97 percent for people who take a two-dose regimen.⁷ Before the measles vaccine was introduced, the number of annual deaths from measles was between 400 and 500.⁸ Until last week, that number, for a decade, had been zero.⁹ One vaccine-preventable death is one too many.

Though the measles vaccine, for decades, has kept people “out of the hospital” and “out of the morgue,” states and jurisdictions nationally are seeing worrying declines in vaccination rates.¹⁰ The number of schools with vaccination rates below 90 percent—a critical threshold to contain a measles outbreak—has climbed by thousands over the past five years.¹¹ Ninety-five percent of people who have developed measles this year—including the one fatality—either had an unknown vaccination status or were unvaccinated.¹² In Gaines County, Texas, the center of the current outbreak, the vaccination rate for kindergarteners is 82 percent—more than ten percent lower than the national average.¹³

We are deeply disturbed that Secretary Kennedy has downplayed the severity of the outbreak. The day the country experienced its first measles fatality in a decade, Secretary

³ Texas Department of State Health Services, *Texas Announces First Death in Measles Outbreak* (Feb. 26, 2025) (press release).

⁴ *Unvaccinated New Mexico Resident Dies of Suspected Measles*, The New York Times (Mar. 6, 2025).

⁵ Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, *Measles Cases in the United States, 2025* (Mar. 5, 2025) (<https://libguides.mskcc.org/publichealth/measles2025>).

⁶ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *History of Measles* (May 9, 2024) (<https://www.cdc.gov/measles/about/history.html>).

⁷ *Kennedy Said Measles Outbreaks Are ‘Not Unusual.’ Here’s What the Data Says*, The New York Times (Feb. 28, 2025).

⁸ See note 6.

⁹ See note 7.

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ *Childhood Vaccination Rates Were Falling Even Before the Rise of R.F.K. Jr.*, The New York Times (Jan. 12, 2025).

¹² See note 5.

¹³ See note 7.

Kennedy called the current outbreak “not unusual.”¹⁴ His well-documented rhetoric disputing the safety of childhood vaccines erodes trust in measures that have kept Americans safe for decades.^{15,16,17,18,19,20,21} In his recent Fox News opinion piece, Kennedy fell short of urging parents to vaccinate their children against measles—a dangerous oversight considering vaccines are the most effective way to prevent the disease.^{22,23} Instead, he continues to baselessly tout Vitamin A as a measles treatment, even as the very physicians confronting the outbreak in Texas dispute its efficacy.^{24,25}

Already in its first six weeks, the Trump Administration has signaled its willingness to undercut vaccine development, deployment, and administration. The Administration’s decision to postpone a meeting of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices and cancel a meeting of the Food and Drug Administration’s Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee threaten to obstruct the development of essential public health measures.^{26,27} Furthermore, the Trump Administration is reportedly considering canceling a contract to develop a vaccine for bird flu— even as the nation

¹⁴ *RFK Jr. Said Measles Outbreaks are ‘Not Unusual’ in the US. Doctors Say He’s Wrong*, CNN (Feb. 27, 2025).

¹⁵ World Health Organization, *Autism* (Nov. 15, 2023) (<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/autism-spectrum-disorders>).

¹⁶ *RFK Jr.’s Controversial Health Stances, from Vaccines to Raw Milk*, NBC News (Nov. 15, 2024).

¹⁷ *Lancet Accepts MMR Study ‘False’*, BBC News (Feb. 2, 2010).

¹⁸ *RFK Jr. Discusses Potential Role in the Trump Administration and Health Policy Vision*, National Public Radio (Nov. 16, 2024).

¹⁹ *Breaking Down RFK Jr.’s Vaccine Doublespeak*, Rolling Stone (Nov. 16, 2024).

²⁰ Stat, *Here is How We Know That Vaccines Do Not Cause Autism* (Feb. 3, 2025) (<https://www.statnews.com/2025/02/03/vaccine-autism-rfk-jr-how-science-proves-vaccines-do-not-cause-autism/>).

²¹ Salon, *Correcting Our Record* (Jan. 16, 2011) (https://www.salon.com/2011/01/16/dangerous_immunity/).

²² *Measles Outbreak is Call to Action for All of Us*, Fox News (Mar. 2, 2025).

²³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *About Measles* (May 29, 2024) (<https://www.cdc.gov/measles/about/index.html>).

²⁴ *RFK Jr.’s Focus on Vitamin A for Measles Worries Health Experts*, The Washington Post (March 4, 2025).

²⁵ *Instead of Vaccines, RFK Jr. Focuses on Unconventional Measles Treatments, Driving Worries About Misinformation*, CNN (Mar. 5, 2025).

²⁶ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices* (<https://www.cdc.gov/acip/index.html>) (accessed Mar. 6, 2025).

²⁷ *‘We Were Told Nothing.’ What to Know About the Canceled Meeting to Discuss the Next Flu Shot*, TIME (Feb. 27, 2025).

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approaches over 70 human cases.^{28,29} In light of the Secretary Kennedy’s alarming obstruction of vaccine development and our evolving public health crises, it is incumbent on this Committee to step in.

During the Committee’s February 25, 2025, markup of its Oversight and Authorization Plan for the 119th Congress, Republican Members unanimously voted against a Democratic amendment that would explicitly add vaccine-related oversight to the Committee’s agenda. Though Republican Members stressed the “inclusive nature” of the Committee’s plan, we are concerned that the Republican Majority’s silence on Secretary Kennedy’s harmful comments on the ongoing outbreak validates Committee Democrats’ central concern: the Republican Majority is unwilling to conduct rigorous oversight over the Trump Administration’s approach to public health.

In 2019—while now full Committee Chair Guthrie was Ranking Member of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee—our Committee held a bipartisan hearing on measles. At the hearing, Guthrie said that, “given the concerns raised by the measles outbreak and various parts of the nation... it is appropriate to have this hearing to provide greater discussion and examination at a national level.”³⁰ At that time, there were 159 confirmed cases; today, there are at least 164.³¹ We urge you to act with similar urgency now and convene an immediate hearing so we can hear directly from Secretary Kennedy without delay.

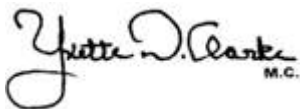
Sincerely,



Frank Pallone, Jr.
Ranking Member



Diana DeGette
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Health



Yvette D. Clarke
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Oversight
and Investigations

²⁸ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *H5 Bird Flu: Current Situation* (March 4, 2025) (<https://www.cdc.gov/bird-flu/situation-summary/index.html>).

²⁹ *Trump Administration Weighs Pulling Funding for Moderna Bird Flu Vaccine*, Bloomberg News Reports, Reuters (Feb. 26, 2025).

³⁰ House Committee on Energy and Commerce, *Hearing on Confronting a Growing Public Health Threat: Measles Outbreaks in the U.S.*, 116th Cong. (Feb. 27, 2019) (Serial No.116-9).

³¹ *Id.*