

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074
MINORITY (202) 225-6051
<https://oversight.house.gov>

July 10, 2025

Matthew Buzzelli
Chief of Staff
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30329

Dear Mr. Buzzelli:

Vaccines are one of the greatest public health achievements in history—saving millions of lives every year. Childhood vaccination prevents approximately 4 million deaths around the world annually.¹ In the United States, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) has long served as a trusted, science-driven body guiding vaccine recommendations to protect the health of all Americans. Secretary Kennedy’s reckless decision to fire all 17 members of this expert committee in favor of anti-vaccine conspiracy theorists and misinformation peddlers is therefore irresponsible and dangerous. As this newly politicized ACIP moves to block flu vaccines, elevate anti-vax voices, and question well-established childhood immunization schedules, the American people are demanding answers. Oversight Committee Democrats write to understand how these appointees were selected, whether their decisions align with science, and what potential conflicts of interest may be compromising our public health system.

For children born in America between 1994 and 2023, routine childhood vaccinations are estimated to prevent 508 million cases of illness, 32 million hospitalizations, and more than 1.1 million deaths.² ACIP plays an important role in ensuring that Americans have access to lifesaving vaccines.³ However, on June 25 and 26, ACIP had its first meeting since Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. fired all 17 of the Committee’s members and replaced these vaccine experts with his own picks, including anti-

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Fast Facts on Global Immunization* (Sept. 19, 2024) (online at www.cdc.gov/global-immunization/fast-facts/index.html).

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Health and Economic Benefits of Routine Childhood Immunizations in the Era of the Vaccines for Children Program—United States, 1994-2023* (Aug. 8, 2024) (online at www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/73/wr/mm7331a2.htm). See also Center for American Progress, *Childhood Vaccination Has Saved Millions of Lives, but Rising Hesitancy Could Reverse Decades of Progress* (Jan. 8, 2025) (online at www.americanprogress.org/article/childhood-vaccination-has-saved-millions-of-lives-but-rising-hesitancy-could-reverse-decades-of-progress).

³ *How RFK, Jr.’s Dismissal of CDC Immunization Committee Panelists Will Affect America’s Vaccine Access*, Scientific American (June 10, 2025) (online at www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-rfk-jr-s-dismissal-of-cdcs-advisory-committee-on-immunization-practices/).

vaccine conspiracy theorists, spreaders of vaccine misinformation, and those without specialized knowledge of vaccines.⁴ During the June 25–26 meeting, following a last-minute resignation by one of Secretary Kennedy’s selected members, the seven new ACIP members revealed a deeply concerning prejudice against vaccines. The new members announced plans to review longstanding childhood vaccination schedules, voted not to approve some flu vaccines based on misinformation, and prioritized anti-vaccine activists over CDC experts.

Specifically, we are alarmed that at that meeting, Secretary Kennedy’s picks:

- Announced they would reevaluate vaccines available to children and vaccines long found to be safe, without a legitimate medical rationale;⁵
- Recommended that children and adults no longer receive flu vaccines containing trace amounts of the preservative thimerosal, based on the debunked claim that thimerosal is linked to autism. Notably, thimerosal is rarely used in vaccines;⁶
- Platformed non-experts and longtime anti-vaccine activists, such as the former president of Secretary Kennedy’s anti-vaccine organization. This unqualified individual repeated long-debunked claims about vaccine safety, shared inaccurate information regarding vaccine ingredients, and referenced studies that do not exist;⁷

⁴ *RFK Jr.: HHS Moves to Restore Public Trust in Vaccines* (June 9, 2025) (online at www.wsj.com/opinion/rfk-jr-hhs-moves-to-restore-public-trust-in-vaccines-45495112); *Kennedy Removes All C.D.C. Vaccine Panel Experts*, New York Times (June 9, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/06/09/health/rfk-jr-cdc-vaccine-panel.html); *Who is on RFK Jr’s New Vaccine Panel—And What Will They Do?*, Nature (June 12, 2025) (online at www.nature.com/articles/d41586-025-01852-z); *Kennedy’s New CDC Panel Includes Members Who Have Criticized Vaccines and Spread Misinformation*, Associated Press (June 12, 2025) (online at <https://apnews.com/article/cdc-acip-vaccine-committee-9f58e1f004075b081718ff078de88d76>).

⁵ *First Meeting of New CDC Vaccine Panel Reveals Policy Chaos Sown by RFK Jr*, The Guardian (June 25, 2025) (online at www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/jun/25/cdc-vaccine-panel-rfk-acip).

⁶ *RFK Jr.’s Vaccine Advisers Raise Disproven Fears About the Preservative Thimerosal*, NPR (June 26, 2025) (online at www.npr.org/sections/shots-health-news/2025/06/26/nx-s1-5438485/cdc-acip-rfk-thimerosal-vaccines); *Kennedy’s New Advisers Rescind Recommendations for Some Flu Vaccines*, New York Times (June 26, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/06/26/health/rfk-jr-vaccines-acip-cdc.html). Notably, the one new member of ACIP to vote against this recommendation was the only pediatrician on the panel. Dr. Cody Meissner explained that “[t]he risk from influenza is so much greater than the non-existent, as far as we know, risk from thimerosal” and emphasized that “[t]here is no scientific evidence that thimerosal has caused a problem.” *Id.*

⁷ *First Meeting of New CDC Vaccine Panel Reveals Policy Chaos Sown by RFK Jr*, The Guardian (June 25, 2025) (online at www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/jun/25/cdc-vaccine-panel-rfk-acip); *Kennedy’s New Advisers Rescind Recommendations for Some Flu Vaccines*, New York Times (June 26, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/06/26/health/rfk-jr-vaccines-acip-cdc.html). Presentations at ACIP meetings are typically made by CDC staff members, not outside participants. *Id.*

- Indicated interest in voting at the next ACIP meeting to stop allowing the use of a combination vaccine for measles, mumps, rubella, and chickenpox for children younger than four years of age;⁸ and
- Failed to vote on a recommendation for fall COVID-19 boosters, despite the fact that this vote had already been on the initial agenda for the June meeting. This delay means that ACIP may not vote on a recommendation in time for vaccines to be offered in fall.⁹

These actions, which relied on testimony by non-experts outside the rigorous review process, highlight significant issues with the quality of the evidence presented at this meeting. One vaccine organization raised concerns regarding the “low standard of the evidence presented” and “abandoning the scientific rigor we have come to expect from this committee.”¹⁰ Reevaluating vaccine safety decisions based on personal beliefs, rather than new data, risks increasing anti-vaccine rhetoric and distrust.¹¹

Further, it appears that Secretary Kennedy’s influence over ACIP may go beyond hand-picking the members of the panel, with clear impacts on public health. Reportedly, a CDC document that was removed without explanation from the June 25–26 meeting materials before the meeting began had “detailed peer-reviewed literature” showing “no association” between autism and prenatal exposure to flu vaccines containing thimerosal.¹² According to one ACIP member, the document was removed because it had not been “authorized by the Office of the Secretary.”¹³ This type of blatant political interference towards ACIP led the American Academy of Pediatrics to boycott the meeting. Following the meeting, a liaison for the organization stated: “This meeting showcased an ACIP that has drifted so far from its long-standing focus on science, evidence and public health. When that focus returns, we will, too.”¹⁴

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *First Meeting of New CDC Vaccine Panel Reveals Policy Chaos Sown by RFK Jr*, The Guardian (June 25, 2025) (online at www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/jun/25/cdc-vaccine-panel-rfk-acip).

¹⁰ *Vaccinate Your Family, Vaccinate Your Family’s Statement on the Newly Appointed ACIP’s June 2025 Meeting* (June 26, 2025) (online at vaccinateyourfamily.org/june-acip-statement/).

¹¹ Vaccine Integrity Project, University of Minnesota, *Viewpoint: CDC’s Upcoming Vaccine Advisory Meeting Set Up to Sow Distrust in Vaccines* (June 23, 2025) (online at www.cidrap.umn.edu/vaccine-integrity-project/viewpoint-cdcs-upcoming-vaccine-advisory-meeting-set-sow-distrust).

¹² *RFK Jr.’s Vaccine Advisers Raise Disproven Fears About the Preservative Thimerosal*, NPR (June 26, 2025) (online at www.npr.org/sections/shots-health-news/2025/06/26/nx-s1-5438485/cdc-acip-rfk-thimerosal-vaccines).

¹³ *Id.*; *Chaos at CDC’s vaccine meeting. One Member Resigns. Some scientific materials not vetted by Agency Experts. American Academy of Pediatrics Boycotts*, Inside Medicine (June 25, 2025) (online at insidemedicine.substack.com/p/chaos-at-cdcs-vaccine-meeting-one); *‘I’m Not Quite Sure How to Respond to This Presentation’*, The Atlantic (June 27, 2025) (online at www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2025/06/rfk-acip-american-vaccine-policy/683364/).

¹⁴ *Anti-Vaccine Activist Presents Data to Kennedy’s Reshaped CDC Advisory Panel*, NBC News (June 26, 2025) (online at www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/anti-vaccine-activist-presents-data-rfk-jrs-reshaped-cdc-advisory-pane-rcna215201). See also *‘I’m Not Quite Sure How to Respond to This Presentation’*, The Atlantic

Secretary Kennedy has repeatedly put his personal political ideology ahead of public health and safety, without regard for genuine scientific evidence. His efforts have drawn serious criticism from even Republican public health experts. President Trump's former FDA commissioner, Dr. Scott Gottlieb, said that Secretary Kennedy's purge of the ACIP membership, "does look like a political process right now."¹⁵ President Trump's former surgeon general, Dr. Jerome Adams, expressed concern that politicizing ACIP jeopardizes trust in public health institutions.¹⁶ This politicization has directly threatened the ability of public health agencies to function and has driven vital public health experts to leave CDC.¹⁷

These attacks on the independent scientific public health process will make Americans sicker. It will make it harder for Americans to go to work and will mean higher medical bills. Kids will miss more school, and most tragically, lives will be lost that could have easily been saved. Over the past 50 years, vaccines against 14 common pathogens have saved approximately 154 million lives across the globe and decreased infant mortality by 40%.¹⁸ According to one physician who represents the American Academy of Family Physicians on an ACIP working group, the decision to reevaluate childhood vaccines that have been proven safe for decades, and particularly to do so through a lens of anti-vaccine rhetoric, "is irresponsible and will cost lives." This physician emphasized that reevaluating these vaccines in this manner is likely "to raise doubt about our traditional pediatric vaccines that have saved millions of lives, particularly during one of the worst measles outbreaks we have had in years."¹⁹

ACIP and CDC recommendations are critical to ensure the affordability and accessibility of vaccines.²⁰ CDC recommendations determine which vaccines must be covered by insurance companies, including government insurance programs.²¹ This includes the Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program, which provides vaccines at no cost to uninsured children, Medicaid-

(June 27, 2025) (online at www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2025/06/rfk-acip-american-vaccine-policy/683364/).

¹⁵ *Transcript: Scott Gottlieb on "Face the Nation with Margaret Brennan," June 29, 2025*, CBS News (June 29, 2025) (online at www.cbsnews.com/news/scott-gottlieb-face-the-nation-transcript-06-29-2025/).

¹⁶ *Trump's First Surgeon General: RFK Jr. Purging the CDC Advisory Committee Will Put Lives at Risk*, Time (June 10, 2025) (online at time.com/7292898/rfk-jr-cdc-advisory-committee-purge-risk-jerome-adams-essay/).

¹⁷ *See RFK Jr.'s Vaccine Panel to Review Childhood Immunization Schedule*, Washington Post (June 25, 2025) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/health/2025/06/25/rfk-jr-vaccine-panel-acip-meeting/); *CDC Official Overseeing COVID-19 Vaccine Recommendations Resigns*, CBS News (June 4, 2025) (online at www.cbsnews.com/news/cdc-official-overseeing-covid-19-vaccine-recommendations-resigns/).

¹⁸ *The Staggering Success of Vaccines*, Nature (Oct. 23, 2024) (online at www.nature.com/articles/d41586-024-03412-3).

¹⁹ *Inside the Unusual, RFK-Appointed Panel That's Deciding on Childhood Vaccines*, USA Today (June 25, 2025) (online at www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2025/06/25/rfk-acip-cdc-childhood-vaccines/84352648007/).

²⁰ *How RFK, Jr.'s Dismissal of CDC Immunization Committee Panelists Will Affect America's Vaccine Access*, Scientific American (June 10, 2025) (online at www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-rfk-jr-s-dismissal-of-cdcs-advisory-committee-on-immunization-practices/).

²¹ *Kennedy Removes All C.D.C. Vaccine Panel Experts*, New York Times (June 9, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/06/09/health/rfk-jr-cdc-vaccine-panel.html).

eligible or Medicaid-enrolled children, and American Indian or Alaska Native children.²² Vaccinations based on ACIP recommendations have nearly eliminated or substantially decreased hospitalization rates for babies with illnesses caused by rotavirus and respiratory syncytial virus, commonly known as RSV²³—this is the type of progress which could be jeopardized by attacks on CDC’s scientific independence.

Changes to CDC’s longstanding vaccine recommendations based on politics instead of science threaten to make lifesaving vaccines inaccessible for millions of Americans by removing insurance coverage, even when their health care provider recommends vaccination as the best way to protect their health.

Given the deeply concerning events of the June 25–26, 2025, ACIP meeting and the impact that ACIP’s decisions will have on vaccine access for all Americans, including children, we request a briefing with CDC staff by July 17, 2025. We also request the following information and documents by July 24, 2025:

1. All communications and documents related to the June 25–26, 2025 ACIP meeting, including but not limited to decision memos and attachments, research used for decision-making (including any evidence that ACIP members considered the potential for increased suffering and death of Americans, including children, as a result of their positions), presentations and draft presentations, and discussion of the ACIP meeting agenda and new ACIP working groups;
2. All communications and documents related to the selection of ACIP’s new members, including but not limited to the materials used to determine their eligibility and expertise, materials used to assess conflicts of interest, and materials and information related to potential ACIP members considered but not chosen;
3. A detailed description of why and how each of the seven individuals serving on ACIP as of June 25, 2025, was selected, including but not limited to the individuals who participated in the discussions and decisions, as well as the credentials that HHS used to determine each individual’s eligibility for ACIP membership; and

²² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *About the Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program* (June 26, 2024) (online at www.cdc.gov/vaccines-for-children/about/index.html); Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program Eligibility* (July 1, 2024) (online at www.cdc.gov/vaccines-for-children/hcp/program-eligibility/index.html). Astoundingly, some of the ACIP members appointed by Secretary Kennedy reportedly appeared unaware of the VFC program during the June 25–26 meeting. *Kennedy Removes All C.D.C. Vaccine Panel Experts*, New York Times (June 9, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/06/09/health/rfk-jr-cdc-vaccine-panel.html).

²³ *RFK Jr. to Fire All Members of the CDC’s Vaccine Advisory Committee*, Politico (June 9, 2025) (online at www.politico.com/news/2025/06/09/rfk-jr-to-fire-all-members-of-the-cdcs-vaccine-advisory-committee-00395235).

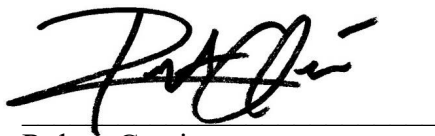
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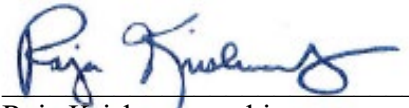
4. All communications between any individual at HHS or CDC and any of the seven individuals serving on ACIP as of June 25, 2025, that occurred between January 20, 2025, and June 25, 2025, including but not limited to emails, text messages, and instant messages on official and personal devices.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Committee Democratic staff at (202) 225-5051. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Robert Garcia
Ranking Member



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Health Care and
Financial Services

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman

The Honorable Glenn Grothman, Chairman
Subcommittee on Health Care and Financial Services