

Setting the Record Straight:
An Accounting of Secretary Robert F.
Kennedy, Jr.'s September 4, 2025
Testimony on the CDC & Vaccines

September 16, 2025

A Senate Finance Committee
Minority Staff Report

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Introduction

The Senate Finance Committee held a hearing with Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. on September 4, 2025. The firing of Dr. Susan Monarez, the former Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), was discussed extensively at the hearing. Dr. Monarez is a microbiologist who President Trump nominated to serve as the CDC Director. Just a few weeks ago, on July 29, 2025, the Senate voted to confirm her, with no Republicans voting against her nomination. On August 27, 2025, less than one month later, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced that Dr. Monarez was “no longer director.”

Dr. Monarez recounted the events that preceded her firing in a recent op-ed in *The Wall Street Journal*. She alleges that Secretary Kennedy told her to “preapprove the recommendations of a vaccine advisory panel newly filled with people who have publicly expressed anti-vaccine rhetoric.” When she refused to approve vaccine recommendations not supported by scientific evidence, she was forced out of the CDC. Dr. Monarez also refused to fire career scientists.

During the Finance Committee hearing, Secretary Kennedy denied Dr. Monarez’s allegations and accused her of lying to the American people. However, later in his testimony, he made inconsistent, and sometimes confusing, statements about these events. Secretary Kennedy also, once again, made numerous false and misleading statements related to vaccines, despite multiple Finance Committee members on both sides of the aisle expressing concerns about his dishonesty about this issue and the related actions he would take as Secretary during his confirmation process.

The allegations against Secretary Kennedy are gravely serious and bear directly on the health and safety of the American people. In just a few days, the CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) could vote to restrict access to vaccines that prevent Hepatitis B, measles, mumps, rubella, and chickenpox (MMRV), in addition to making more changes related to the COVID-19 vaccines. Dr. Monarez is no longer there to reject these recommendations, if they are not supported by science.

The American people deserve answers. They have reason to be concerned that Secretary Kennedy and HHS are stripping away critical preventive care that saves lives, without clinical or scientific justification. With that in mind, I asked my staff to compile the enclosed report outlining Secretary Kennedy’s testimony related to the CDC and his views of vaccines. My hope is that this report will support immediate Congressional action related to this matter. Congress must fulfill its constitutional duties as an oversight body and get to the bottom of the allegations against Secretary Kennedy before more people are hurt by his actions.



Ron Wyden
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Finance

Executive Summary

This report provides a detailed accounting of Secretary Kennedy's testimony before the Senate Finance Committee on September 4, 2025. This hearing, entitled "The President's 2026 Health Care Agenda," was supposed to review the Trump Administration's 2026 health care priorities.¹ In the days leading up to the hearing, however, the news broke that Secretary Kennedy attempted to force Dr. Susan Monarez, the newly appointed Director of the CDC, to resign unless she fired career scientists and preapproved vaccine recommendations that do not have a scientific basis. Dr. Monarez refused, and she was later fired. The Finance Committee hearing was the first time Secretary Kennedy sat before Congress following these events. Thus, much of the hearing focused on the CDC and vaccines.

The first part of this report reviews Secretary Kennedy's testimony related to the firing of Dr. Monarez and other matters related to the CDC. The report puts Secretary Kennedy's testimony in context with publicly reported information. The report makes the following findings:

- **Allegations that Secretary Kennedy Demanded Dr. Monarez Preapprove ACIP Recommendations:** Secretary Kennedy's testimony is inconsistent with Dr. Monarez's allegation that he demanded she preapprove vaccine recommendations. Secretary Kennedy alleged during the hearing that Dr. Monarez was fired because she told him she was an untrustworthy person, a claim her lawyers deny. Toward the end of the hearing, Secretary Kennedy conceded that whether Dr. Monarez would approve ACIP recommendations was discussed during the meetings in question.
- **Secretary Kennedy's Demands that Dr. Monarez Fire CDC Career Scientists:** During his testimony, Secretary Kennedy admitted that he demanded Dr. Monarez fire CDC career scientists. Information about who he wanted to fire and the specific rationale for the firings, including whether there was cause, remains unknown.
- **Additional Details Related to Secretary Kennedy's Meetings with Dr. Monarez:** The hearing revealed additional details about Secretary Kennedy's meetings with Dr. Monarez, but much remains unknown about who was in the room and what was said. Secretary Kennedy revealed that HHS Deputy Secretary Jim O'Neill, now the Acting CDC Director, was present for at least one meeting. Other HHS aides, such as Stefanie Spear and Matt Buckham, were also reportedly present at some of the meetings. Secretary Kennedy also admitted to telling Dr. Monarez that CDC is the most corrupt agency within HHS.
- **Questions about Whether Secretary Kennedy Consults CDC Scientists:** Secretary Kennedy's testimony did little to dispel public reporting that he excludes many CDC career scientists from vaccine-related decisions and policymaking. When asked whether he is briefed by CDC scientists, Secretary Kennedy said he communicates with the CDC, but was only able to identify one scientist by name. The person he identified is central to vaccine conspiracy theories and does not work in the CDC's core vaccination center. Reportedly, when Secretary Kennedy changed CDC recommendations for the COVID-19

¹ Committee on Finance, *The President's 2026 Health Care Agenda*, U.S. Senate, (Sep. 4, 2025) <https://www.finance.senate.gov/hearings/the-presidents-2026-health-care-agenda>;

vaccines, he did not consult or share the evidence that was the basis for this decision with CDC scientists. Secretary Kennedy appeared to push back on these allegations at the hearing.

- **Questions Related to the Integrity of ACIP:** Secretary Kennedy repeatedly claimed that he is enhancing ACIP's integrity, but public reporting paints a different picture. After firing all 17 members of ACIP in June, Secretary Kennedy replaced them with non-experts and/or vaccine skeptics. When questioned about whether he was aware of some of the new ACIP members' fringe views, Secretary Kennedy deflected. He repeatedly claimed he is removing conflicts of interest from ACIP, yet it is not clear how the new members are being vetted. Two of the new members served as paid witnesses in litigation against manufacturers, including one member who worked on litigation Secretary Kennedy himself was involved in. He denied that serving as a paid witness in a trial against vaccine manufacturers constitutes a financial conflict of interest. The evidence related to votes during the first meeting of the newly reconstituted ACIP panel also reportedly did not receive appropriate scientific vetting.
- **Questions Related to David Geier & Vaccine Safety Studies at HHS:** As Secretary Kennedy sidelines scientists, he is staffing HHS with prominent vaccine skeptics. One such individual is David Geier, the author of multiple widely discredited studies linking vaccines to autism. Secretary Kennedy seemed to deny that Mr. Geier is involved in any vaccine studies at HHS. This is inconsistent with widespread reporting about career scientists who are concerned about being asked to work with Mr. Geier and revise existing studies, including some studies that refute a link between vaccines and autism. Secretary Kennedy acknowledged that Mr. Geier has access to vaccine safety data.

The second part of this report reviews Secretary Kennedy's testimony related to vaccines and puts it in context with his past statements, evidence related to his claims, and his actions as Secretary. The report makes the following findings:

- **Claims Misrepresenting the Safety of messenger RNA (mRNA) Technology and COVID-19 Vaccines:** Vaccines developed using mRNA technology are a revolutionary medical achievement developed under President Trump's Operation Warp Speed. These vaccines saved millions of lives during the COVID-19 pandemic. While Secretary Kennedy agreed that President Trump deserves praise for Operation Warp Speed, he would not provide a clear answer about the extent to which he believes the initiative's COVID-19 vaccines saved lives. Nor would Secretary Kennedy provide a clear answer about how many Americans died of COVID-19. Instead, he repeatedly suggested COVID-19 vaccines are dangerous, despite vast scientific evidence confirming their safety and effectiveness.
- **Claims Misrepresenting the Clinical Data Supporting COVID-19 Vaccine Use:** Throughout the hearing, Secretary Kennedy falsely suggested there is "no clinical data" supporting COVID-19 vaccine use in various populations. He also specifically argued that there is inadequate clinical data supporting use in children, despite the existence of both randomized controlled trials and extensive real-world evidence demonstrating safety, efficacy, and effectiveness in this population. Under Secretary Kennedy's leadership, HHS narrowed CDC recommendations and Food and Drug Administration

(FDA) labels related to COVID-19 vaccines, reportedly without heeding the career scientists' recommendations. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), however, continue to recommend COVID-19 vaccines.

- **Claims Misrepresenting Vaccine Accessibility under his Leadership:** Throughout his confirmation process, Secretary Kennedy *repeatedly* told the Finance Committee that he would not make it more difficult for people to access vaccines. Since assuming office, he has already taken actions that reduced access to COVID-19 vaccines. When confronted with stories about people struggling to get COVID-19 vaccines, Secretary Kennedy told Senators they were “wrong” and that “everybody can get the vaccine.” Widespread reporting confirms the Secretary’s claims about COVID-19 vaccine accessibility are untrue. In just a few days, ACIP may vote on recommendations related to MMRV and Hepatitis B vaccines, which could restrict access to these vaccines, too.
- **Other Misrepresentations about Vaccine Safety:** Secretary Kennedy has a long history of questioning the safety of a broad array of vaccines. He repeated many of these claims at the Finance Committee hearing. For example, he appeared to reaffirm his notorious past claim that there is “no safe and effective vaccine.” He also linked vaccines to autism and misrepresented the rigor of clinical testing supporting the use of vaccines on the childhood immunization schedule, including by questioning the safety testing for the Hepatitis B vaccine. All of these statements misrepresent facts, and run counter to the overwhelming scientific consensus that these life-saving vaccines are safe and effective.

Secretary Kennedy's Testimony on Events that Took Place at CDC

The events surrounding the firing of Dr. Monarez, the Director of the CDC, were discussed extensively at the September Finance Committee hearing. On July 29, 2025, the U.S. Senate confirmed Dr. Susan Monarez to be Director of the CDC. Earlier in 2025, former Congressman Dave Weldon was nominated for the same role, but he was unable to obtain sufficient support for Senate confirmation due to bipartisan concerns about his views on vaccines.² Vaccines were also central to Dr. Monarez's nomination hearings and the ability to secure sufficient support from the Senate for her confirmation. During her confirmation process, she repeatedly expressed support for vaccination and her belief that vaccines save lives.³

Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee Chairman Cassidy even sought explicit reassurances from Dr. Monarez related to the scientific integrity of the CDC's ACIP. ACIP recommendations have a significant impact on Americans' ability to access vaccines. In June, Secretary Kennedy sparked controversy when he fired all 17 sitting ACIP members and replaced them with new members who lack expertise in vaccines and/or have expressed views about vaccines that strongly contradict with scientific evidence. The CDC Director is authorized to approve or reject ACIP recommendations. Dr. Monarez responded to Chairman Cassidy's questioning by noting that "ACIP has a vital role to play...And it must make sure that it is using science and evidence to drive that decision-making."⁴

Dr. Monarez was sworn in as the CDC Director on July 31, 2025. At the ceremony, Secretary Kennedy described Dr. Monarez as having "unimpeachable scientific credentials" and said he had "full confidence in her ability to restore the CDC's role as the most trusted authority in public health."⁵ Secretary Kennedy also made comments about Dr. Monarez shortly after President Trump nominated her in March: "I handpicked Susan for this job because she is a longtime champion of MAHA values, and a caring, compassionate and brilliant microbiologist and a tech wizard who will reorient CDC toward public health and gold-standard science."⁶

Despite these glowing statements, less than one month into Dr. Monarez's tenure, HHS announced that she was "no longer director" of the CDC. According to public reporting, an administration official described Secretary Kennedy and Dr. Monarez as "at odds over vaccine policy."⁷ Prior to the week of her firing, Dr. Monarez reportedly tried to establish additional

² Alayna Treene, Brenda Goodman and Meg Tirrell, *White House withdraws nomination of Dr. Dave Weldon to lead CDC*, CNN, (Mar. 13, 2025) <https://www.cnn.com/2025/03/13/health/cdc-weldon-nomination-withdrawn>.

³ Andrew Joseph, *Trump's pick to run CDC ratifies importance of vaccines as RFK Jr. moves to limit access*, STAT, (June 25, 2025) <https://www.statnews.com/2025/06/25/susan-monarez-cdc-director-senate-help-hearing-vaccines-save-lives/>.

⁴ Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, *Nomination of Susan Monarez to be Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Department of Health and Human Services*, U.S. Senate, (June 25, 2025) <https://www.youtube.com/live/1-HO22OaHsU?si=0YiDIgXfNiGYtD0w&t=6423>.

⁵ Brian Bennett, *Amid Chaos at CDC, White House Stands With RFK Jr.'s Decision to Fire Director*, TIME, (Aug. 28, 2025) <https://time.com/7313058/cdc-rfk-jr-susan-monarez-vaccines-trump/>.

⁶ Robert F. Kennedy Jr. (@SecKennedy), X, (Mar. 25, 2025, 12:23 PM) <https://x.com/SecKennedy/status/1904569723972386861>.

⁷ Sheryl Gay Stolberg, Apoorva Mandavilli, and Christina Jewett, *White House Says New C.D.C. Director Is Fired, but She Refuses to Leave*, The New York Times, (Aug. 27, 2025) <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/08/27/health/cdc-monarez-kennedy-vaccines.html>.

guardrails and transparency around ACIP, but was told by unknown HHS officials that she could not.⁸

On August 25, 2025, Dr. Monarez was called into a meeting with Secretary Kennedy. During that meeting, Secretary Kennedy and his aide, Stefanie Spear, reportedly demanded that Dr. Monarez: (1) approve ACIP vaccine recommendations, even if such recommendations were not supported by scientific evidence; and (2) fire career scientists at CDC. When Dr. Monarez reportedly refused both demands, they pressured her to resign. Dr. Monarez reportedly contacted Chairman Cassidy after the meeting to express concerns. Chairman Cassidy reportedly attempted to contact Secretary Kennedy about the incident.⁹

In addition to the initial August 25, 2025 meeting, at least one additional meeting between Secretary Kennedy and Dr. Monarez reportedly took place. *Politico* reported that, several hours later on August 25, Dr. Monarez was again called into a meeting with Secretary Kennedy, Stefanie Spear, and HHS Chief of Staff Matt Buckham.¹⁰ *The New York Times* also reports that there may have been an additional meeting on August 26, 2025 where Secretary Kennedy's demands were reiterated to Dr. Monarez.¹¹ On August 27, 2025, Dr. Monarez was told she was fired.¹² On August 29, 2025, the September ACIP meeting was announced in the *Federal Register*, and noted that recommendation votes may be scheduled, including for the Hepatitis B, MMRV, and COVID-19 vaccines.¹³

Dr. Richard Besser, a former Acting Director of the CDC, reportedly called Dr. Monarez about an unrelated matter on August 27, 2025, before her firing was announced. Dr. Monarez reportedly confided in Dr. Besser about the events. Dr. Besser told reporters: "She said there were two things she would never do in the job. She said she was asked to do both of those, one in terms of firing her leadership, who are talented civil servants like herself, and the other was to rubber stamp [vaccine] recommendations that flew in the face of science, and she was not going to do either of those things."¹⁴ Dr. Besser also told *The New York Times* that Dr. Monarez had

⁸ Sophie Gardner, *Monarez would not cross 'red lines' before she was fired, confidant says*, *Politico*, (Aug. 28, 2025) <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/08/28/monarez-cdc-vaccines-rfk-trump-00533358>.

⁹ Sophie Gardner and David Lim, *The meeting that sparked Monarez's dismissal*, *Politico*, (Aug. 29, 2025; Updated Aug. 30, 2025)

<https://www.politico.com/news/2025/08/29/inside-kennedys-effort-to-oust-the-cdc-director-00537125>; Sheryl Gay Stolberg, Apoorva Mandavilli, and Christina Jewett, *Kennedy Sought to Fire C.D.C. Director Over Vaccine Policy*, *The New York Times*, (Aug. 28, 2025) <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/08/28/health/rfk-jr-susan-monarez-cdc-vaccines.html>.

¹⁰ Sophie Gardner and David Lim, *The meeting that sparked Monarez's dismissal*, *Politico* (Aug. 29, 2025; Updated Aug. 30, 2025)

<https://www.politico.com/news/2025/08/29/inside-kennedys-effort-to-oust-the-cdc-director-00537125>.

¹¹ Sheryl Gay Stolberg, Apoorva Mandavilli, and Christina Jewett, *Kennedy Sought to Fire C.D.C. Director Over Vaccine Policy*, *The New York Times*, (Aug. 28, 2025) <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/08/28/health/rfk-jr-susan-monarez-cdc-vaccines.html>.

¹² *Id.*

¹³ U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Meeting of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices*, 90 Fed. Reg. 42,245 (Aug. 29, 2025) No. CDC-2025-0454 <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/08/29/2025-16706/meeting-of-the-advisory-committee-on-immunization-practices>.

¹⁴ Sophie Gardner, *Monarez would not cross 'red lines' before she was fired, confidant says*, *Politico*, (Aug. 28, 2025) <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/08/28/monarez-cdc-vaccines-rfk-trump-00533358>.

concerns that some of the actions Secretary Kennedy was asking her to take were legally questionable.¹⁵

On September 4, 2025, Dr. Monarez wrote an op-ed in *The Wall Street Journal* where she claimed for the first time that Secretary Kennedy told her to “preapprove the recommendations of a vaccine advisory panel newly filled with people who have publicly expressed anti-vaccine rhetoric.”¹⁶ She noted that she was fired because she “held the line and insisted on rigorous scientific review.”¹⁷

At the Finance Committee hearing on September 4, 2025, Secretary Kennedy repeatedly called Dr. Monarez a liar. He denied Dr. Monarez’s assertion that he demanded she approve ACIP vaccine recommendations.¹⁸ In response, Dr. Monarez’s lawyers issued the following statement: “Dr. Monarez stands by what she said in her op-ed in *The Wall Street Journal*, would repeat it all under oath and continues to support the vision outlined at her confirmation hearing that science will control her decisions.”¹⁹

I. Allegations that Secretary Kennedy Demanded Dr. Monarez Approve ACIP Vaccine Recommendations Regardless of Evidence

CDC’s ACIP reviews scientific evidence and makes immunization recommendations for the general population. These vaccine recommendations are tied to health plan coverage and cost-sharing requirements, including for programs like Medicare, Medicaid, the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), and private health insurance coverage. Additionally, ACIP recommendations are used to determine Vaccines for Children (VFC) program coverage.²⁰ For over 30 years, the VFC program has provided vaccines to eligible children and their providers at no cost.²¹ ACIP recommendations have historically been considered a vital and trustworthy source of information to support clinical decision-making by doctors and other health care professionals. Many state laws also allow pharmacies to administer certain vaccines when they are recommended by ACIP.²²

¹⁵ Sheryl Gay Stolberg, Apoorva Mandavilli, and Christina Jewett, *Kennedy Sought to Fire C.D.C. Director Over Vaccine Policy*, *The New York Times*, (Aug. 28, 2025)

<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/08/28/health/rfk-jr-susan-monarez-cdc-vaccines.html>.

¹⁶ Susan Monarez, *Robert F. Kennedy Jr., the CDC and Me*, *The Wall Street Journal*, (Sept. 4, 2025)

<https://www.wsj.com/opinion/robert-f-kennedy-jr-the-cdc-and-me-b4ca2eaa>.

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ Caitlin Yilek, *RFK Jr. accuses ousted CDC director of lying about pressure to preapprove vaccine recommendations*, *CBS News*, (Sept. 4, 2025)

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/rfk-cdc-director-vaccine-recommendations/>.

¹⁹ Mark S. Zaid (@MarkSZaidEsq), X, (Sept. 4, 2025, 3:15 PM)

<https://x.com/markszaidesq/status/1963682298441662816>.

²⁰ U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *About the Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, (June 26, 2024)

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines-for-children/about/index.htm>.

²¹ *Id.*

²² Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, *Impact of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices Recommendations on State Law*, (June 23, 2025)

<https://www.astho.org/topic/resource/impact-of-acip-recommendations-on-state-law/>.

On June 9, 2025, Secretary Kennedy fired all 17 members of ACIP, who were respected doctors and scientists with substantial expertise on vaccines. He installed individuals who are unqualified, have serious conflicts of interest, and/or have expressed widely discredited views about vaccines. The decision to fire the entire ACIP panel was unprecedented, and circumvented existing processes. Typically, new members undergo significant vetting, with the process often taking months or even years to complete and involving multiple expert stakeholders.²³ It is not clear how HHS vetted the newly selected ACIP members. Experts and stakeholders have raised sweeping concerns about the new appointees, noting that the new panel is devoid of appropriate expertise which jeopardizes ACIP's credibility and could further erode public trust in vaccines.²⁴

Dr. Monarez publicly alleged that, on August 25, 2025, Secretary Kennedy personally demanded that she “preapprove the recommendations of a vaccine advisory panel newly filled with people who have publicly expressed anti-vaccine rhetoric.”²⁵ In the immediate aftermath of the HHS announcement that she was “no longer director,” Dr. Monarez’s lawyers also released a statement, which read in part: “When CDC Director Dr. Monarez refused to rubber-stamp unscientific, reckless directives and fire dedicated health experts, she chose protecting the public over serving a political agenda.”²⁶

CDC scientists who resigned following Dr. Monarez’s firing also claim that, prior to the meeting, Dr. Monarez attempted to implement guardrails around Secretary Kennedy’s newly reconstituted ACIP. Specifically, the scientists claim that Dr. Monarez attempted to replace an unnamed federal official involved in the committee with someone with more experience.²⁷ She also sought to publicly post the evidence ACIP uses to inform their votes for public vetting weeks before a meeting.²⁸ HHS reportedly blocked Dr. Monarez from making these changes. The CDC’s former Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Debra Houry, noted: “She wanted to have engagement and transparency. Those things were not done. She was given feedback from HHS that those couldn’t happen, and she was called to a meeting with the Secretary on Monday.”²⁹

STAT also reported that Dr. Monarez did not follow through on a request from Stefanie Spear – just hours after a shooting at the CDC campus – to write a letter telling states they do not have to follow CDC vaccine guidance.³⁰ Dr. Monarez also reportedly became aware of efforts to add new

²³ Edwin Asturias, Noel Brewer, Oliver Brooks, et al., *Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices at a Crossroads*, JAMA, 2025;334(8):667–668 doi:10.1001/jama.2025.10776.

²⁴ National Foundation for Infectious Diseases, *Experts Sound Alarm after ACIP Members Removed*, (June 10, 2025) <https://www.nfid.org/experts-sound-alarm-after-acip-members-removed/>.

²⁵ Susan Monarez, *Robert F. Kennedy Jr., the CDC and Me*, The Wall Street Journal, (Sept. 4, 2025) <https://www.wsj.com/opinion/robert-f-kennedy-jr-the-cdc-and-me-b4ca2eaa>.

²⁶ Sophie Gardner, *Monarez would not cross ‘red lines’ before she was fired, confidant says*, Politico, (Aug. 28, 2025) <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/08/28/monarez-cdc-vaccines-rfk-trump-00533358>.

²⁷ *Id.*

²⁸ *Id.*

²⁹ Leah Douglas, Dan Levine, and Julie Steenhuysen, “Do no harm”: Why three CDC officials left over vaccine policy, Reuters, (Aug. 28, 2025) <https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/do-no-harm-why-three-cdc-officials-left-over-vaccine-policy-2025-08-28/>.

³⁰ Daniel Payne, *Inside the CDC director’s ouster: Kennedy demanded acceptance of new vaccine policies; Susan Monarez refused*, STAT, (Aug. 28, 2025) <https://www.statnews.com/2025/08/28/cdc-director-fired-behind-the-scenes-look/>.

ACIP members, even though she was sidelined from ACIP-related decisions.³¹ On September 15, 2025 – just days before the September ACIP meeting – Secretary Kennedy did, in fact, appoint five new ACIP members, including multiple vaccine skeptics.³²

During the Finance Committee hearing, Senators repeatedly asked Secretary Kennedy whether he demanded that Dr. Monarez approve ACIP recommendations not supported by science. He accused Dr. Monarez of lying, and denied that he demanded Dr. Monarez rubber-stamp vaccine recommendations from his new ACIP panel.

Excerpt on p. 17:

Senator Wyden: "So, my first question, Mr. Secretary, is did you in fact do what Director Monarez said you did, which is tell her to just go along with vaccine recommendations even if she didn't think such recommendations aligned with scientific evidence? That is -- "

Secretary Kennedy: "No, I did not."

Excerpt on p. 17:

Senator Wyden: "So, she's lying today to the American people in the Wall Street Journal?"

Secretary Kennedy: "Yes, sir."

Excerpt on p. 90-91:

Senator Warren: "So you're saying [Monarez is] lying?"

Secretary Kennedy: "Yes. Every conversation I had with her, there were witnesses."

Senator Warren: "This is the same person that less than a month earlier, you stood next to her and described her as unimpeachable and you had full confidence in her and that you had full confidence in her scientific credentials and in a month, she became a liar. Is that what you're saying?"

Secretary Kennedy: "You should ask her what changed."

³¹ *Id.*

³² Press Release, HHS, CDC Announce New ACIP Members, Department of Health and Human Services, (Sept. 15, 2025) <https://www.hhs.gov/press-room/hhs-cdc-announce-new-acip-members-sept-2025.html>; Katherine Dillinger, Five new members named to influential CDC vaccine advisory committee days ahead of key meeting, CNN, (Sept. 15, 2025) <https://www.cnn.com/2025/09/15/health/cdc-acip-new-members>; Lauren Weber and Lena H. Sun, RFK Jr. weighs adding critics of coronavirus shots to key vaccine panel, The Washington Post, (Sept. 8, 2025) <https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2025/09/08/rfk-jr-new-vaccine-advisers/>. HHS has not confirmed the reported list.

Excerpt on p. 91-92:

Senator Sanders: "And you're also repeating now that [Monarez] is a liar, correct, what she wrote in the Wall Street Journal?"

Secretary Kennedy: "If she wrote that I fired her because she refused to sign on in advance for the ACIP committee, no, that's not accurate."

During questioning by Senator Warren, Secretary Kennedy asserted that he told Dr. Monarez that she had to resign because she told him that she was not "trustworthy." He doubled down on this assertion during questioning by Senator Sanders. This accounting of events by Secretary Kennedy is confusing and inconsistent with on-the-record statements from Dr. Monarez's lawyers, who deny that this occurred.³³

Excerpt on p. 89-90:

Senator Warren: "Did you tell the head of the CDC that if she refused to sign off on your changes to the childhood vaccine schedule that she had to resign?"

Secretary Kennedy: "No, I told her that she had to resign because I asked her, are you a trustworthy person, and she said no."

Senator Warren: "What?"

Secretary Kennedy: "So if you had an employee who told you they weren't trustworthy, would you ask them to resign, Senator?"

Senator Warren: "So I'm sorry, but that is not what she has said publicly."

Excerpt on p. 91:

Senator Sanders: "I just wanted to pick up on Senator Warren's point. Are you telling us that the former head of CDC went to you, you asked her, are you a trustworthy person and she said, no, I am not a trustworthy person?"

Secretary Kennedy: "She didn't say no, I'm not a trustworthy person. She said, no. I'm giving a quote and I asked her twice."

³³ The Daily, *Senators Unleash on Kennedy*, The New York Times, audio podcast, (Sept. 5, 2025) <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/05/podcasts/the-daily/rfk-jr-senate-vaccine-policy.html>.

Toward the end of the hearing, however, during questioning by Senator Warnock, Secretary Kennedy conceded that he did in fact have a direct discussion with Dr. Monarez about her willingness to approve forthcoming ACIP vaccine recommendations.

Excerpt on p. 129:

Senator Warnock: "Did you demand that [Monarez] accept the recommendations of your hand-picked vaccine advisory panel without further review by career CDC scientists?"

Secretary Kennedy: "No, I did not."

Senator Warnock: "You didn't ask for her commitment ahead of time that she would accept the recommendations from the advisory panel -- panel? You're denying that?"

Secretary Kennedy: "What I asked her about is she had made a statement that she was going to not sign on, and I wanted clarification about that."

Senator Warnock: "Did -- did you -- did you -- did you tell her to accept the -- the advisory panel's recommendations?"

Secretary Kennedy: "I told her I didn't want her to have a rule that she's not going to sign on to it."

Secretary Kennedy also insinuated throughout the hearing, and in an op-ed in *The Wall Street Journal*, that the rationale for his actions was that, during the Trump Administration's first term, the CDC performed poorly during the COVID-19 pandemic and he "replaced leaders who resisted reform."³⁴

Excerpt on p. 12:

Secretary Kennedy: "As my father once said, progress is a nice word, but change is its motivator and change has its enemies. That's why we need new blood at CDC. That's also why it's imperative that we remove officials with conflicts of interest and catastrophically bad judgment and political agendas."

Excerpt on p. 12:

Secretary Kennedy: "America is home to 4.2 percent of the world's population, yet we had nearly 20 percent of the COVID deaths. We literally did worse than any country in the world. And the people at CDC who oversaw that process, who put masks on our children, who closed our schools are the people who will be leaving."

³⁴ Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., *RFK Jr.: HHS Moves to Restore Public Trust in Vaccines*, *The Wall Street Journal*, (June 9, 2025) <https://www.wsj.com/opinion/rfk-jr-hhs-moves-to-restore-public-trust-in-vaccines-45495112>.

These statements do not establish a credible rationale for firing Dr. Monarez. For example, Dr. Monarez did not work at the CDC during the COVID-19 pandemic. At the outset of the pandemic, she worked at the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), and in early 2023, she was given a leadership role at the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health (APRA-H).³⁵

There is also evidence that Secretary Kennedy may have shared some of Dr. Monarez's views on how to reform the CDC. When Dr. Monarez was sworn in, Secretary Kennedy said he had "full confidence in her ability to restore the CDC's role as the most trusted authority in public health."³⁶ Additionally, Secretary Kennedy's op-ed justifying his actions at CDC, published after Dr. Monarez was fired, appeared to draw its CDC reform ideas heavily from an internal memo Dr. Monarez wrote to Stefanie Spear right before she was sworn in as CDC Director.³⁷ Each of the priorities Dr. Monarez identified in the memo also appears in Secretary Kennedy's op-ed on CDC reform.³⁸

Secretary Kennedy's testimony is inconsistent with Dr. Monarez's claim that he demanded she approve ACIP recommendations regardless of whether they are supported by scientific evidence. This is a serious allegation that warrants immediate congressional action.

II. Secretary Kennedy Demands that Dr. Monarez Fire CDC Career Scientists

In at least one meeting on August 25, 2025, Secretary Kennedy and his aide Stefanie Spear reportedly told Dr. Monarez to resign. During that meeting, Secretary Kennedy reportedly demanded that Dr. Monarez "fire top leaders at the CDC."³⁹ At the Finance Committee hearing, during an exchange with Senator Warnock, Secretary Kennedy admitted that he demanded Dr. Monarez fire CDC career scientists and experts.

Excerpt on p. 128:

Senator Warnock: "Did -- did you demand that [Monarez] fire career scientists or public experts at the CDC?"

Secretary Kennedy: "Yes."

³⁵ Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health, *ARPA-H Selects Dr. Susan Monarez as Deputy Director*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, (Jan. 6, 2023)

<https://arpa-h.gov/news-and-events/arpa-h-selects-dr-susan-monarez-deputy-director>.

³⁶ Brian Bennett, *Amid Chaos at CDC, White House Stands With RFK Jr.'s Decision to Fire Director*, TIME, (Aug. 28, 2025) <https://time.com/7313058/cdc-rfk-jr-susan-monarez-vaccines-trump/>.

³⁷ Daniel Payne, *After ousting CDC's director, RFK Jr. mirrors her ideas to reform the agency*, STAT, (Sept. 3, 2025) <https://www.statnews.com/2025/09/03/kennedy-cdc-reform-plan-wsj-opinion-article-similar-to-monarez-confidential-memo/>.

³⁸ *Id.*

³⁹ Sophie Gardner and David Lim, *The meeting that sparked Monarez's dismissal*, Politico, (Aug. 29, 2025; Updated Aug. 30, 2025) <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/08/29/inside-kennedys-effort-to-oust-the-cdc-director-00537125>.

It is not clear which CDC scientists and experts Secretary Kennedy asked Dr. Monarez to fire and whether there was cause to fire them.

It is also not clear whether Secretary Kennedy still intends to fire more career scientists at CDC and, if so, what roles they serve in. On September 7, 2025, Secretary Kennedy alluded to potential additional rounds of firings at CDC, pointing to the agency's response to the COVID-19 pandemic as a rationale, during a *Fox News* interview, stating: "They need to go. We need new blood and we need new people who are committed to public health and integrity and gold-standard science."⁴⁰

Many CDC scientists help support programs and decisions that have a direct impact on Americans' health and safety, such as by evaluating evidence to support public health policy and medical professional decisionmaking, monitoring and protecting Americans from disease outbreaks, and ensuring patient access to vaccination. Further congressional oversight into who Secretary Kennedy wants to fire and why is therefore warranted, especially given the alleged circumstances surrounding Dr. Monarez's firing and the other allegations contained in this report.

III. Additional Details Related to Secretary Kennedy's Meetings with Dr. Monarez

Several additional details about what was said and who attended the meetings between Secretary Kennedy and Dr. Monarez surfaced during the Finance Committee hearing.

Secretary Kennedy stated during the hearing that there were other attendees at all of his meetings with Dr. Monarez. He confirmed that Jim O'Neill was present at at least one of these meetings during an exchange with Senator Warnock. Mr. O'Neill is the current Deputy Secretary of HHS, and Secretary Kennedy recently made Mr. O'Neill the Acting Director of the CDC.

Excerpt on p. 126-127:

Senator Warnock: "You -- you called Dr. Monarez to your office on August 25th for a meeting. Is that correct, yes or no?"

Secretary Kennedy: "I -- it could be. I just don't know the date. I'd have to check my calendar."

Senator Warnock: "Was Jim O'Neill, the man you just appointed as acting director of CDC --"

Secretary Kennedy: "Yeah."

Senator Warnock: "In the room on whatever date you met with him since you can't recall? Was he in the room when you met with Dr. --"

Secretary Kennedy: "Yes."

⁴⁰ Robert F. Kennedy Jr. (@SecKennedy), X, (Sept. 7, 2025, 4:07 PM) <https://x.com/SecKennedy/status/1964782559776432398>.

Multiple outlets have also reported that Stefanie Spear, a Senior Counselor to Secretary Kennedy, also attended at least two of the meetings between the Secretary and Dr. Monarez. Ms. Spear previously served as an advisor on Secretary Kennedy's presidential campaign, and *STAT* described her as "Kennedy's most enduring ally in the top ranks of HHS." Ms. Spear also has ties to Children's Health Defense, Secretary Kennedy's former non-profit that has been widely criticized for its views and rhetoric on vaccines.⁴¹

Politico reported that Matt Buckham, the HHS Chief of Staff, was present for at least one meeting.⁴² Other attendees at the meetings between Secretary Kennedy and Dr. Monarez have not been publicly disclosed.

Senator Warnock also asked Secretary Kennedy questions related to what he said to Dr. Monarez during his meetings with her the week of August 25, 2025. In one notable exchange, Secretary Kennedy admitted to calling the CDC "the most corrupt agency at HHS."

Excerpt on p. 129-130:

Senator Warnock: "Did you say [to Monarez] that the CDC was 'the most corrupt federal agency in the history of the world?'"

Secretary Kennedy: "Not the history of the world, but definitely within HHS."

Senator Warnock: "Did you say -- did you say --"

Secretary Kennedy: "I did not say that, but I did say it's the most corrupt agency at HHS and maybe the government."

Secretary Kennedy has a well-documented, long-standing vendetta against the CDC. He has repeatedly promoted conspiracy theories that the CDC suppressed information related to vaccine safety. For example, *NBC News* reported that, at the AutismOne Conference in 2019, Secretary Kennedy compared the CDC's vaccination division to a fascist enterprise and accused the agency of engaging in a cover-up of vaccine harms akin to the pedophilia scandal in the Catholic Church.⁴³

Additional congressional oversight to uncover details about what was said and who was present for the meetings between Dr. Monarez and Secretary Kennedy (as well as other relevant

⁴¹ Isabella Cueto, *8 key players inside RFK Jr.'s HHS*, *STAT*, (Mar. 18, 2025)

<https://www.statnews.com/2025/03/18/rfk-jr-hhs-who-to-know-series-profiles-eight-key-players-federal-health-policy/>.

⁴² Sophie Gardner and David Lim, *The meeting that sparked Monarez's dismissal*, *Politico*, (Aug. 29, 2025; Updated Aug. 30, 2025)

<https://www.politico.com/news/2025/08/29/inside-kennedys-effort-to-oust-the-cdc-director-00537125>.

⁴³ Brandy Zadrozny, *RFK Jr. attacked the CDC's 'fascism' and likened vaccinating children to abuse by the Catholic Church*, *NBC News*, (Nov. 27, 2024)

<https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/rfk-jr-vaccines-cdc-fascism-abuse-catholic-church-autism-conference-s-rcna181605>.

meetings between Dr. Monarez and political staff at HHS) may help shed light on what took place and provide answers for the American people about how the Secretary is making decisions that impact their health.

IV. Questions Related to Whether Secretary Kennedy Consults CDC Scientists about Vaccines & Vaccine-Related Policy

Allegations that Secretary Kennedy is not consulting CDC career scientists about vaccine policy have been widely reported, including before Dr. Monarez's firing. These allegations raise serious questions about how Secretary Kennedy is making decisions related to vaccines that affect millions of Americans' health and safety, and who he is consulting.

The CDC plays a unique and central role with respect to federal vaccine policy. The agency's mission is to protect Americans' health and safety, including by preventing and controlling diseases. The CDC conducts surveillance to monitor diseases to help ensure the federal government makes informed decisions about how to protect the American people from outbreaks. With respect to vaccines, the FDA's key role is to evaluate products for safety and efficacy and balance risks and benefits prior to approving them for marketing in the United States. The CDC is then responsible for reviewing clinical trials and other studies (e.g., epidemiologic research) to make recommendations about who should get vaccinated. CDC also engages in vaccine safety monitoring, jointly with the FDA, to detect patterns in adverse events.⁴⁴ Thus, failure to consult CDC scientists about decisions and policies that are under the agency's purview could mean that experts with vital and unique knowledge might not have the opportunity to provide input on relevant policy decisions that could have sweeping impacts across the country.

In June 2025, Dr. Fiona Havers, a Senior Advisor at the CDC on vaccine policy, resigned following Secretary Kennedy's firing of the sitting members on ACIP. Dr. Havers stated that "CDC processes are being corrupted in a way that I haven't seen before," noting that agency staff were not consulted about any of the decisions.⁴⁵ Her resignation followed that of Dr. Lakshmi Panagiotakopoulos, another CDC scientist who oversaw an ACIP workgroup related to COVID-19 vaccination. She resigned over concerns that Secretary Kennedy bypassed ACIP's process and scientific review to change COVID-19 vaccine recommendations for children and pregnant women.⁴⁶

After Dr. Monarez was forced out in August 2025, more scientists began speaking out and resigned from the CDC, including:

- Dr. Debra Houry, Chief Medical Officer and Deputy Director for Program Science;
- Dr. Demetre Daskalakis, Director of the National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases;

⁴⁴ Jennifer Kates and Josh Michaud, *How HHS, FDA, and CDC Can Influence U.S. Vaccine Policy*, KFF, (Nov. 20, 2024) <https://www.kff.org/covid-19/how-hhs-fda-and-cdc-can-influence-u-s-vaccine-policy/>.

⁴⁵ Apoorva Mandavilli, *Why a Vaccine Expert Left the C.D.C.: 'Americans Are Going to Die'*, The New York Times, (June 18, 2025) <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/06/18/health/havers-cdc-vaccines-kennedy.html>.

⁴⁶ Alexander Tin, *CDC official overseeing COVID-19 vaccine recommendations resigns*, CBS News, (Updated June 4, 2025) <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/cdc-official-overseeing-covid-19-vaccine-recommendations-resigns/>.

- Dr. Daniel Jernigan, Director of the National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases; and
- Dr. Jennifer Layden, Director of the Office of Public Health Data, Surveillance, and Technology.

Since their resignation, multiple scientists claimed that they were not aware of Secretary Kennedy receiving vaccine-related briefings from CDC career scientists, which raises questions about who Secretary Kennedy is consulting on vaccine policy and other decisions that affect millions of Americans. For example, Dr. Houry said: “He hasn’t been working with CDC or listening to our scientists. None of our scientists have ever briefed the Secretary about vaccines.”⁴⁷ Dr. Daskalakis has also stated: “No subject matter expert from the National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases has ever briefed the Secretary on anything. We have not briefed him about vaccines [...] We have not briefed him about measles. We have not briefed him about COVID. We have never been invited to the inner sanctum, and that is highly atypical in any environment.”⁴⁸

CDC scientists also claim that Dr. Monarez herself was sidelined in vaccine-related policy discussions, even though one of the fundamental roles of the CDC Director is to review vaccine recommendations and engage on vaccine policy decisions. *The New York Times* reported that Dr. Monarez was subject to an “unusual arrangement” where she had to “run her plans” through political staff at HHS and the CDC, including Matt Buckham and Matt Buzzelli, the Chief of Staff at the CDC.⁴⁹ Dr. Houry alleged to *NBC News* that Dr. Monarez was “not allowed” to make updates and scientific improvements to vaccine work.⁵⁰ Dr. Daskalakis said that Dr. Monarez was “cut out of the process” for determining vaccine policy and “told within no uncertain terms that she was not to be decision maker in vaccine policy, and that I [Dr. Daskalakis] would have to speak to the chief of staff of CDC [Matt Buzzelli] instead of her [Dr. Monarez], she got that directive from HHS.”⁵¹

Secretary Kennedy denied allegations that he does not get briefings from CDC scientists at the Finance Committee hearing. When asked to provide names, the only name Secretary Kennedy was able to provide was Dr. William Thompson, who is a central figure in conspiracy theories surrounding the CDC and vaccines.⁵² However, Secretary Kennedy did appear to offer to provide a list of CDC scientists who have briefed him.

Excerpt on p. 110-111:

⁴⁷ Inside Politics Sunday, Frieden: 'It's no longer possible to have any confidence in what's coming out of HHS or CDC', CNN, (Aug. 31, 2025) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3zKG0gJ8TK8&t=231s>.

⁴⁸ Sophie Gardner, *Monarez would not cross 'red lines' before she was fired, confidant says*, Politico, (Aug. 28, 2025) <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/08/28/monarez-cdc-vaccines-rfk-trump-00533358>.

⁴⁹ Sheryl Gay Stolberg, Apoorva Mandavilli, and Christina Jewett, *White House Says New C.D.C. Director Is Fired, but She Refuses to Leave*, The New York Times, (Aug. 27, 2025) <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/08/27/health/cdc-monarez-kennedy-vaccines.html>.

⁵⁰ Erika Edwards and Berkeley Lovelace Jr., *CDC crisis triggered by upcoming vaccine meeting, leading to director's firing and resignations*, NBC News, (Aug. 28, 2025) <https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/cdc-crisis-vaccine-meeting-director-fired-rfk-jr-rcna227777>.

⁵¹ Anna Kutz, *CDC official fears for agency's 'integrity' under RFK Jr.*, NewsNation, (Updated Sept. 5, 2025) <https://www.newsnationnow.com/health/demetre-daskalakis-rfk-jr-cdc-resignation/>.

⁵² This issue is discussed in detail beginning on p. 56 of this document.

Senator Lujan: "Secretary Kennedy, Dr. Daskalakis, who recently resigned as director of the National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases, his resignation -- resignation -- resignation letter stated he and his team were never allowed to brief you. I'm curious who you're listening to since it's clear you're not listening to qualified experts like Dr. Daskalakis.

Can you give the committee the name of the person?"

[...]

Secretary Kennedy: "I'm getting briefed by -- all the time by CDC."

Senator Lujan: "Just a name."

Secretary Kennedy: "Well, Dr. William Thompson's one name."

[...]

Secretary Kennedy: "I can get you a whole list of other -- it's on my schedule."

As of September 14, 2025, the HHS Employee Directory lists Dr. William W. Thompson as an Epidemiologist employed in the CDC's National Center for HIV, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and Tuberculosis Prevention.⁵³ Dr. Thompson does not work in the main hub for vaccine expertise and policy decisions within the CDC, which is the National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD). As Dr. Daskalakis, the former head of NCIRD, explained: "It is not possible that [Dr. Thompson] briefed him on measles, or on flu, or on polio, or on vaccines, since that individual does not work anywhere in that environment."⁵⁴ It is therefore still unclear who Secretary Kennedy is consulting about vaccine science beyond Dr. Thompson. Secretary Kennedy's communications with Dr. Thompson also warrant further oversight given the prominence of Dr. Thompson in the vaccine skeptic community.

In response to subsequent questioning by Senator Warnock, Secretary Kennedy claimed he has been briefed by the CDC's "senior vaccine safety scientist," but did not identify this person by name. As explained on p. 57 of this document, Secretary Kennedy appears to refer to Dr. Thompson as the senior vaccine safety scientist at the CDC during questioning by Senator Johnson, even though that is not the role attributed to Dr. Thompson in the HHS Employee Directory. It therefore seems possible he is again referring to Dr. Thompson, but it is not clear.

Excerpt on p. 124-126:

⁵³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Employee Directory, *William W. Thompson*, (Accessed Sept. 14, 2025); screenshot on file with the Committee.

⁵⁴ Elizabeth Crisp, *Former CDC official pokes holes in Kennedy's claims of being briefed by experts*, The Hill, (Sept. 5, 2025) <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/5487868-cdc-official-contradicts-kennedy/>.

Senator Warnock: "And, you know, I understand that some people may have concerns about new medical breakthroughs, but those people don't have the world's top medical experts working under them -- under them. You've been over HHS for seven months now. Have you ever been briefed by CDC's career immunization officials to discuss your concerns?"

[...]

Secretary Kennedy: "Yes, I have."

[...]

Senator Warnock: "Officials?"

Secretary Kennedy: "Yeah."

Senator Warnock: "The career immunization officials to express your --"

Secretary Kennedy: "The -- the senior vaccine safety scientist, for example."

Secretary Kennedy also seems to have bypassed ACIP scientific review and processes with respect to his decisions to change CDC recommendations related to COVID-19 vaccines. In addition to not running this decision through ACIP, there are publicly reported allegations that Secretary Kennedy did not even consult CDC scientists before changing COVID-19 vaccine recommendations for pregnant women and children. This decision has directly restricted access to COVID-19 vaccines, as described in detail beginning on p. 46 of this document.

Specifically, on May 27, 2025, Secretary Kennedy announced on social media that COVID-19 vaccines would no longer be recommended for healthy children and healthy pregnant women.⁵⁵ *STAT* reported that neither the CDC nor ACIP were consulted about this decision.⁵⁶ Dr. Houry and Dr. Daskalakis both stated that they learned of Secretary Kennedy's decision when he posted about it on social media, even though scientists who report to both of them would typically be consulted about such decisions. Dr. Daskalakis further claims that the documentation supporting that decision was withheld from CDC scientists despite requests to review it.^{57,58} Dr. Daskalakis

⁵⁵ Robert F. Kennedy Jr. (@SecKennedy), X, (May 27, 2025, 10:16 AM) <https://x.com/seckennedy/status/1927368440811008138>.

⁵⁶ Helen Branswell, *RFK Jr. ends Covid vaccine recommendations for healthy children, pregnant people*, *STAT*, (May 27, 2025) <https://www.statnews.com/2025/05/27/covid-shots-pregnant-women-children-recommendation-change-hhs-secretary-kennedy/>.

⁵⁷ Celine Gounder, *Senior CDC officials resign after Monarez ouster; cite concerns over scientific independence*, *CBS News*, (Aug. 28, 2025) <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/senior-cdc-officials-resign-after-monarez-ouster-cite-concerns-over-scientific-independence/>.

⁵⁸ The Daily, *The C.D.C.'s Vaccine Chief on Why Quitting Was His Only Option*, *The New York Times*, audio podcast, (Aug. 29, 2025) <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/08/29/podcasts/the-daily/cdc-vaccine-daskalakis.html>.

has suggested that his team then had to “retrofit” the scientific analysis to meet the Secretary’s directive as posted in the video on social media.⁵⁹

Secretary Kennedy seemed to push back on these allegations when Senator Hassan tried to ask him why decisions related to COVID-19 vaccine access were made behind closed doors.

Excerpt on p. 58-59:

Senator Hassan: "And given that, if you agree with President Trump that the vaccine saved millions of lives, why have you acted behind closed doors to overrule scientists and limit the freedom of parents to choose the COVID vaccine for their children? Why have you done that?"

Secretary Kennedy: "For the COVID vaccine? That was removed by FDA because they were -- the industry --"

Senator Hassen: "No, it was behind closed doors."

Secretary Kennedy: "No, that's not what --"

Senator Hassan: "And scientists -- scientists who said they wanted to brief you on the science, scientists who wanted to understand why the FDA, why you unilaterally changed the parameters for giving vaccines, making it possible now, to Senator Cassidy's colleagues' points, that they're going to have to go off label to --"

Secretary Kennedy: "This is crazy talk. You're just making stuff up."

Senator Hassan: "To -- to prescribe a vaccine for children. I'm not making things up."

Secretary Kennedy’s statements at the Finance Committee regarding the extent to which he is consulting CDC scientists about vaccine-related decisions and policy stand in contrast to on-the-record allegations made by CDC scientists themselves. It would be valuable for Congress to review a list of CDC scientists who have briefed Secretary Kennedy directly (as he offered during the hearing), including when the briefing(s) occurred, a full list of attendees, and the subject matter of the briefing(s).

V. Questions Related to the Integrity of CDC Guidance & ACIP

Senators on the Finance Committee also questioned Secretary Kennedy about how his recent actions could erode the scientific integrity and trustworthiness of CDC guidance, decisions, and recommendations coming out of ACIP. For example, Senator Barrasso questioned Secretary Kennedy about what steps he would take to ensure the decisions are

⁵⁹ Demetre Daskalakis (@dr_demetre), X, (Aug. 27, 2025, 7:14 PM) https://x.com/dr_demetre/status/1960843433473376602.

based “solely on science and not politics,” so that doctors and parents can trust CDC guidance. Secretary Kennedy responded by making sweeping promises related to transparency.

Excerpt on p. 65:

Secretary Kennedy: “So, Americans have lost faith in CDC, and we need to restore that faith. And we're going to do that by telling the truth, and not through propaganda, by making them understand that everything that we say is true. That we're going to tell them what we know, we're going to tell them what we don't know, and we're going to tell them what we're researching and how we're doing it, and we're going to be transparent.”

However, Secretary Kennedy’s promises do not appear to align with his handling of decisions related to ACIP, including the appointment of new members, as well as the lack of transparency surrounding his recent decisions to change COVID-19 vaccine recommendations, which he allegedly made without appropriate scientific review. Nor do Secretary Kennedy’s transparency promises align with the way he appears to be carrying out research related to vaccine safety (see Section VI beginning on p. 29).

Secretary Kennedy’s decision to fire all 17 sitting ACIP members and replace them with non-experts and vaccine skeptics sparked significant controversy. CDC career scientists, including Dr. Monarez herself, have reportedly been sidelined and not consulted about ACIP-related decisions, including those related to the panel’s membership. For example, *STAT* reported that Dr. Monarez’s oversight of ACIP was shifted to political appointees.⁶⁰ Similar to Dr. Houry’s assertions, Dr. Daskalakis alleges that, before Dr. Monarez was fired, she told him that (unnamed) HHS officials said she could not be involved in vaccine policy decisions and that such decisions needed to go through the chief of staff.⁶¹

In light of these concerns, Senator Bennet pressed Secretary Kennedy to commit to publicly releasing the documents and scientific evidence that ACIP will use to inform recommendations and votes at least six weeks in advance of any committee meetings. Dr. Monarez reportedly tried to implement a similar policy of making ACIP-related documents available in advance of meetings for public input, but unknown HHS officials rejected the idea.⁶² Despite these

⁶⁰ Daniel Payne, *Inside the CDC director's ouster: Kennedy demanded acceptance of new vaccine policies; Susan Monarez refused*, STAT, (Aug. 28, 2025)

<https://www.statnews.com/2025/08/28/cdc-director-fired-behind-the-scenes-look/>.

⁶¹ Demetre Daskalakis (@dr_demetre), X, (Sept. 4, 2025, 12:57 PM)

https://x.com/dr_demetre/status/1963647669336760436.

⁶² Sophie Gardner, *Monarez would not cross 'red lines' before she was fired, confidant says*, Politico, (Aug. 28, 2025) <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/08/28/monarez-cdc-vaccines-rfk-trump-00533358>; Leah Douglas, Dan Levine, and Julie Steenhuisen, “Do no harm”: Why three CDC officials left over vaccine policy, Reuters, (Aug. 28, 2025) <https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/do-no-harm-why-three-cdc-officials-left-over-vaccine-policy-2025-08-28>.

allegations, Secretary Kennedy told Senator Bennet that all the evidence is “transparent for the first time in history.”

Excerpt on p. 34-35:

Senator Bennet: "I think it's critical for you to share the evidence that this panel will rely on. Will you give the American people six months -- or six weeks in advance the record that they're going to rely on to make these decisions? Will you make it transparent for the American people?"

Secretary Kennedy: "All the evidence is transparent. All the evidence --"

Senator Bennet: "Will you make it transparent for the American people so they can comment on it?"

Secretary Kennedy: "All the evidence is transparent for the first time in history and you were never there complaining when the pharmaceutical companies were picking those people and then running their products through with no safety testing."

Secretary Kennedy’s claims about transparency over the evidence that ACIP is using to inform its votes do not appear to align with the events that took place during the first meeting of the reconstituted ACIP panel in June 2025. Prior to that meeting, CDC career scientists compiled and publicly posted a memo outlining the scientific evidence showing the lack of safety risks associated with thimerosal. More than 40 scientific studies have found no link between thimerosal and neurodevelopmental disabilities, including autism.⁶³ This memo was quickly pulled down from ACIP’s website.

When a meeting attendee asked why the memo was pulled down, one of the new ACIP members, Dr. Robert Malone, noted: “My understanding is that article was not authorized by the Office of the Secretary.”⁶⁴ The Office of the Secretary’s rationale for removing this memo is unknown. Dr. Malone’s comment also suggests he may be communicating with Secretary Kennedy or staff in his office, even though Dr. Malone is a sitting member of ACIP, a panel whose members are supposed to be independent. Nevertheless, the newly reconstituted ACIP proceeded to vote on and approve thimerosal recommendations following a presentation by Lyn Redwood⁶⁵ that

⁶³ Lisa Schnirring, *CDC vaccine panel recommends avoiding thimerosal in flu vaccines*, University of Minnesota – Center for Infectious Disease Research & Policy, (June 26, 2025)

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/influenza-vaccines/cdc-vaccine-panel-recommends-avoiding-thimerosal-flu-vaccines>.

⁶⁴ U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) - Day 2 of 2*, (June 26, 2025) <https://www.youtube.com/live/z-16flmZoEc?si=6-T5sYn8dIJg1LYN&t=11379>; Will Stone and Pien Huang, *RFK Jr.'s vaccine advisers raise disproven fears about the preservative thimerosal*, NPR, (June 26, 2025) <https://www.npr.org/sections/shots-health-news/2025/06/26/nx-s1-5438485/cdc-acip-rfk-thimerosal-vaccines..>

⁶⁵ Ms. Redwood is a prominent vaccine skeptic and close ally of Secretary Kennedy. She is a former leader of Children’s Health Defense, Kennedy’s former non-profit that has been widely criticized for its views and rhetoric on vaccines, and is a co-founder of the Coalition for SafeMinds, an advocacy group that focuses on the connection

conflicted with the memo prepared by CDC scientists and prior to being pulled down and revised, contained a citation to a study that does not exist.⁶⁶

As of the time this report was finalized on September 15, 2025, no supporting materials for the ACIP meeting beginning on September 18, 2025 had been posted, aside from the meeting agenda.

In his exchange with Senator Bennet, Secretary Kennedy also repeated claims suggesting that ACIP members had extensive conflicts of interest with the pharmaceutical industry. Secretary Kennedy has repeatedly cited ACIP member conflicts as a pretext for his decision to fire all 17 sitting members, despite evidence that ACIP conflicts of interest are at historic lows.⁶⁷ One study found that, since 2016, an average of only 6.2 percent of ACIP members reported a financial conflict of interest in any given meeting, with less than 1 percent of reported conflicts related to income from vaccine manufacturers.⁶⁸

Nevertheless, Secretary Kennedy has falsely claimed that 97 percent of former ACIP members have conflicts of interest.⁶⁹ He echoed misinformation about ACIP conflicts throughout his confirmation process, in his recent *The Wall Street Journal* op-ed,⁷⁰ and, again, at the September Finance Committee hearing. In exchange with Ranking Member Wyden, for example, Secretary Kennedy again reiterated that he “depolticized” ACIP and “got rid of conflicts of interest.”⁷¹ When Senator Cassidy presented Secretary Kennedy with facts refuting his talking points about ACIP conflicts, the Secretary accused the Senator of being wrong.

Excerpt on p. 21:

Secretary Kennedy: “What we did is we got rid of the conflicts of interest, and we put -- we depolticized [ACIP] and put great scientists on it from a very diverse group.”

between thimerosal and autism. There is no factual evidence supporting a causal relationship between the two and this myth has been widely debunked by peer-reviewed research.

⁶⁶ Michael Eрман, *US CDC vaccine presentation cites study that does not exist, author says*, Reuters, (June 24, 2025)

<https://www.reuters.com/business/finance/us-cdc-report-shows-no-evidence-linking-thimerosal-containing-vaccines-autism-2025-06-24/>.

⁶⁷ Genevieve Kanter, Toni Mankowitz, and Peter Lurie, *Conflicts of Interest in Federal Vaccine Advisory Committees*, JAMA, (Aug. 18, 2025) doi:10.1001/jama.2025.13245.

⁶⁸ Berkeley Lovelace Jr., *Conflicts on vaccine panels were at record lows before Kennedy's firings*, NBC News, (Aug. 18, 2025)

<https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/conflicts-vaccine-panels-record-lows-kennedys-firings-rcna225219>.

⁶⁹ Committee on Finance, *Hearing to consider the nomination of Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., of California, to be Secretary of Health and Human Services*, U.S. Senate, (Jan. 29, 2025)

<https://www.finance.senate.gov/hearings/hearingto-consider-the-nomination-of-robert-f-kennedy-jr-of-california-to-be-secretary-of-health-and-human-services> at 3:10:45; Pien Huang, *RFK says most vaccine advisers have conflicts of interest. A report shows they don't*, NPR, (Mar. 11, 2025)

<https://www.npr.org/sections/shots-health-news/2025/03/11/nx-s1-5323771/rfk-jr-vaccine-advisers-conflicts-interest>.

⁷⁰ Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., *RFK Jr.: HHS Moves to Restore Public Trust in Vaccines*, The Wall Street Journal, (June 9, 2025) <https://www.wsj.com/opinion/rfk-jr-hhs-moves-to-restore-public-trust-in-vaccines-45495112>.

⁷¹ Committee on Finance, *The President's 2026 Health Care Agenda*, U.S. Senate, (Sep. 4, 2025) <https://www.finance.senate.gov/hearings/the-presidents-2026-health-care-agenda> at 1:17:19.

Excerpt on p. 40:

Senator Cassidy: "You've called for, and rightly so, that we should restrict participation in agencies for those with conflict of interest. I would like to submit for the record, an evaluation of the conflict of interest of those who are on the ACIP and the Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Board. It was not 97 percent as alleged, rather it was 6.9 percent and it was 1.2 percent, I think for the other panel."

[...]

Senator Cassidy: "Now I am concerned though, because many of those whom you have nominated for the ACIP board--"

Secretary Kennedy: "Senator, you have the facts wrong in there."

Historically, ACIP has followed rigorous procedures to mitigate conflicts. ACIP members underwent significant vetting, with a process that sometimes took up to two years to complete before an ACIP appointment.⁷² Once appointed, ACIP members were also subject to ongoing scrutiny related to potential conflicts of interest. Members were required to fill-out continuous disclosures and were subject to reviews throughout their appointments. At the outset of each ACIP meeting and prior to each vote, members with any identified conflicts would recuse themselves.⁷³

The extent to which HHS is vetting new ACIP members for conflicts of interest is not clear. Some of the new members, however, do appear to have conflicts. For example, Senator Cassidy pointed out that several of the new members have previously been paid to serve as expert witnesses against vaccine manufacturers. Two of the new ACIP members were paid expert witnesses in Merck-related litigation, including one member who worked on litigation related to the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine (Gardasil), which Secretary Kennedy himself was involved in.⁷⁴ Secretary Kennedy, however, denied that these are financial conflicts of interest.

Excerpt on p. 41:

Senator Cassidy: "What I am concerned about is that many of those whom you've nominated for ACIP have received revenue

⁷² Edwin Asturias, Noel Brewer, Oliver Brooks, et al., *Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices at a Crossroads*, JAMA, 2025;334(8):667–668 doi:10.1001/jama.2025.10776.

⁷³ U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Conflicts of Interest Disclosures of ACIP Members*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, (July 10, 2025) <https://www.cdc.gov/acip/disclosures/by-member.html>.

⁷⁴ At the September Senate Finance Committee hearing Senator Cassidy stated: "What I am concerned about is that many of those whom you've nominated for ACIP have received revenue as serving as expert witnesses for plaintiffs' attorneys suing vaccine makers." Senator Cassidy was likely referring to Martin Kulldorff and Dr. Robert Malone, two of Secretary Kennedy's newly installed ACIP members, who have served as paid expert witnesses in ongoing litigation against Merck, some of which Secretary Kennedy's family is also involved in. See Christina Jewett and Sheryl Gay Stolberg, *Kennedy's New Vaccine Advisers Helped Lawyers Raise Doubts About Their Safety*, The New York Times, (June 13, 2025) <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/06/13/us/politics/rfk-jr-vaccine-advisers.html>.

as serving as expert witnesses for plaintiffs' attorneys suing vaccine makers. Now, one of my colleagues in another setting alleged that you seem more interested in settlements than science. If we put people who are paid witnesses for vaccine -- people suing vaccines, that actually seems like a conflict of interest. Real quickly, do you agree with that?"

Secretary Kennedy: "No, I don't. It may be a bias, if disclosed, is OK. But it's not a financial conflict. It's not a financial conflict of interest."

Federal government standards and ACIP's own conflict of interest policy, however, suggest that paid witness arrangements can raise conflicts of interest. The HHS Office of Research Integrity considers a financial conflict of interest anything that creates perceived or actual tensions between personal financial gain and the person's ability to serve objectively.⁷⁵ According to ACIP's conflict of interest policy, members should not serve as paid witnesses in litigation involving a vaccine manufacturer.⁷⁶ They also are expected to recuse themselves from any votes on subjects related to their previous work.⁷⁷ This is because ACIP votes and recommendations can be cited by plaintiffs in vaccine litigation.

Members of the Finance Committee also warned during the confirmation process that Secretary Kennedy's actions while in office, including with respect to ACIP, could lead to financial benefits for himself and his family members. Ranking Member Wyden and Senator Warren wrote a letter to then-nominee Kennedy expressing concerns that his actions as Secretary could strengthen plaintiffs' position in vaccine litigation, including on cases for which he was an attorney of record. Under an agreement with the law firm Wisner Baum (formerly Baum Hedlund), Secretary Kennedy was entitled to receive ten percent of any financial award to plaintiffs in contingency fee cases he referred to the firm. After taking office, Secretary Kennedy rerouted his financial interest in the ongoing vaccine litigation to his son. Secretary Kennedy's actions and decisions at HHS could also financially benefit him if he returns to vaccine litigation after his tenure as Secretary is over. In the same letter, the Senators asked Secretary Kennedy to agree to refrain from engaging in vaccine litigation for four years after he completes his time in office, but Secretary Kennedy did not respond to that request.⁷⁸

Dr. Robert Malone, a new ACIP member, has drawn particular scrutiny related to his potential conflicts of interest. Dr. Malone was paid \$350 per hour to serve as an expert witness in a dismissed lawsuit against Merck over the mumps component of its MMR vaccine.⁷⁹ Dr. Malone

⁷⁵ The Office of Research Integrity, *ORI Introduction to RCR: Chapter 5. Conflicts of Interest*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, (Revised Edition Aug. 2007) <https://ori.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/2018-04/rcrintro.pdf>.

⁷⁶ U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices Policies and Procedures, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, (June 2022) <https://www.cdc.gov/acip/downloads/Policies-Procedures-508.pdf>.

⁷⁷ *Id.*

⁷⁸ Elizabeth Warren and Ron Wyden, *Letter to Robert F. Kennedy Jr.*, U.S. Senate, (Feb. 2, 2025) https://www.warren.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/warren_wyden_letter_to_rfk_jr.pdf.

⁷⁹ Christina Jewett and Sheryl Gay Stolberg, *Kennedy's New Vaccine Advisers Helped Lawyers Raise Doubts About Their Safety*, The New York Times, (June 13, 2025) <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/06/13/us/politics/rfk-jr-vaccine-advisers.html>.

holds fringe anti-science views, including declaring that COVID-19 vaccines “caus[e] a form of” AIDS.”⁸⁰ According to *The Washington Post*, in a podcast interview, Dr. Malone said that Americans were being “hypnotized” into believing what they were told about COVID-19 measures (including vaccines), promoted the unfounded theory of “mass-formation psychosis,” and compared the country’s COVID-19 policies to Nazi Germany.⁸¹ Dr. Malone has embraced his anti-science identity, declaring that he considered the label “anti-vaxxer” to be “high praise” and “a compliment.”⁸² Dr. Malone’s conspiracy views extend beyond vaccines. He has espoused broader conspiracy theories about a secret totalitarian world shadow-government called the “New World Order,” including writing last year that “reality has become a theoretical, post-modernist, surrealist construct, able to be contorted, molded, and enforced to comport with any synthetic version of reality which best supports administrative state, SES [Senior Executive Service], and deep state objectives.”⁸³ Dr. Malone’s ACIP appointment raises significant concerns regarding his ability to objectively and rigorously evaluate scientific evidence about vaccine safety.

Senator Bennet questioned whether Secretary Kennedy was aware of some of Dr. Malone’s more extreme views related to vaccines. Rather than answering the question, Secretary Kennedy falsely repeated the misleading claim that Dr. Malone is “one of the inventors of the mRNA vaccine.” Dr. Malone has previously referred to himself as the “inventor” of mRNA vaccines, but this claim has been found to be a major exaggeration. Dr. Malone was involved in early research related to mRNA technology in the late 1980s, but scientists, including researchers who worked with Dr. Malone, say his contributions were minimal.⁸⁴

Excerpt on p. 30-31:

Senator Bennet: “In June, you fired every member of the well-qualified panel that was charged with recommending vaccines to the CDC. No one in your job has ever fired every committee member all at once. That month, you told the American people that you were, quote, going to bring great people onto the ACIP panel, not anti-vaxxers. Are you aware that one of the people you put on the panel, Dr. Robert Malone, claimed that the commonly used mRNA vaccine, quote, causes a form of AIDS and can damage children's, quote, brains, their heart, their immune system and their ability to have children in the future? Yes or no, Mr. Kennedy?”

⁸⁰ David Wallace-Wells, ‘I Think He Is About to Destroy Vaccines in This Country’, *The New York Times*, (June 18, 2025) <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/06/18/opinion/kennedy-vaccine-panel.html>.

⁸¹ Davey Alba, *The Latest Covid Misinformation Star Says He Invented the Vaccines*, *The New York Times*, (Apr. 3, 2022) <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/03/technology/robert-malone-covid.html>; Timothy Bella, *A vaccine scientist's discredited claims have bolstered a movement of misinformation*, *The Washington Post*, (Jan. 24, 2022) <https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2022/01/24/robert-malone-vaccine-misinformation-rogan-mandates/>.

⁸² David Wallace-Wells, ‘I Think He Is About to Destroy Vaccines in This Country’, *The New York Times*, (June 18, 2025) <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/06/18/opinion/kennedy-vaccine-panel.html>.

⁸³ Robert Malone and Jill Glasspool Malone, *PsyWars: Enforcing the New World Order with Foreword by Michael Flynn*, Skyhorse Publishing (2024).

⁸⁴ Davey Alba, *The Latest Covid Misinformation Star Says He Invented the Vaccines*, *The New York Times*, (Apr. 3, 2022) <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/03/technology/robert-malone-covid.html>; Elie Dolgin, *The Tangled History of mRNA Vaccines*, *Nature*, (Sept. 14, 2021) <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-021-02483-w>.

Secretary Kennedy: "Dr. Malone is one of the inventors of--"

Senator Bennet: "Yes or no? Yes, or no, are you -- were you aware that he had that view when you appointed him to this panel?"

[...]

Secretary Kennedy: "Dr. Malone is one of the inventors of the mRNA vaccine, so he knows a lot more about it than I do."

On September 15, 2025 – just days before the September ACIP meeting – Secretary Kennedy announced five new ACIP members.⁸⁵ As with the June ACIP appointees, many of the new ACIP members have strong ties to vaccine skepticism and/or lack expertise in vaccines. For example, Dr. Kirk Milhoan is a Senior Fellow at the Independent Medical Alliance,⁸⁶ which has spread a range of vaccine conspiracy theories, including suggesting that the COVID-19 vaccine “may have been deliberately engineered to cause harm.”⁸⁷ Dr. Milhoan has also advocated against vaccinating children for COVID-19, claiming at a panel led by Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene that “[a]s you add vaccines, your risk to get COVID goes up.”⁸⁸ Dr. Catherine Stein has repeatedly questioned the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic, calling it “not the scary killer the media and government portray it to be.”⁸⁹ Dr. Stein also worked on a paper with the group Health Freedom Ohio, which is allied with Secretary Kennedy’s former non-profit Children’s Health Defense.⁹⁰ The new ACIP members include some individuals who had been listed on a leaked CDC document, the legitimacy of which HHS has not officially confirmed.⁹¹

ACIP has a profound impact on medical practice and Americans’ ability to access vaccines. The lack of transparency surrounding Secretary Kennedy’s actions with regard to ACIP demands further oversight. It is not currently clear who Secretary Kennedy is consulting about ACIP-related matters, whether there is any input from CDC career scientists, the extent to which he and/or his staff are communicating with sitting ACIP members about matters before the panel, and the extent to which new ACIP members are being properly vetted by HHS.

⁸⁵ Katherine Dillinger, *Five new members named to influential CDC vaccine advisory committee days ahead of key meeting*, CNN, (Sept. 15, 2025) <https://www.cnn.com/2025/09/15/health/cdc-acip-new-members>.

⁸⁶ Independent Medical Alliance, *Expert Bio – Kirk Milhoan, MD, PhD, FACC, FAAP*, (Accessed Sept. 12, 2025) <https://imahealth.org/experts/kirk-milhoan/>.

⁸⁷ Independent Medical Alliance, *New Peer-Reviewed Study Asks: Were COVID Injections Engineered to Harm?*, (Sept. 8, 2025) <https://imahealth.org/were-covid-injections-engineered-to-harm/>.

⁸⁸ Cory McCoy, *Discredited COVID-19 vaccine skeptics tied to RFK Jr. group try to sway Franklin County*, Tri-City Herald, (Dec. 19, 2024) <https://www.tri-cityherald.com/news/politics-government/article297307899.html>; Marjorie Taylor Greene, *Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene Leads a Hearing on Injuries Caused By COVID-19 Vaccines: Part II*, (Jan. 12, 2024) <https://www.youtube.com/live/7-p0kFdcVKA?si=2LePLWV7TtLNNRvS&t=3062>.

⁸⁹ Jake Zuckerman, *She’s a public health professor by day; a COVID-19 truther by night*, Ohio Capital Journal, (Feb. 22, 2021) <https://ohiocapitaljournal.com/2021/02/22/shes-a-public-health-professor-by-day-a-covid-19-truther-by-night/>.

⁹⁰ *Id.*

⁹¹ Lauren Weber and Lena H. Sun, *RFK Jr. weighs adding critics of coronavirus shots to key vaccine panel*, The Washington Post, (Sept. 8, 2025) <https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2025/09/08/rfk-jr-new-vaccine-advisers/>.

VI. Questions Related to David Geier & Vaccine Safety Studies at HHS

There is an overwhelming body of scientific evidence disproving any causal link between vaccines and autism. For example, more than 25 peer-reviewed studies refute claims that the MMR vaccine causes autism.⁹² One particularly robust study of MMR vaccine safety involved over 600,000 children in Denmark and found no link between the vaccine and autism.⁹³ Additionally, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) established the Immunization Safety Review Committee (ISRC) and charged it with looking into the relationship between autism and vaccines. The ISRC's report concluded that both published and unpublished epidemiological studies fail to find a link between autism and vaccines containing thimerosal.⁹⁴

Nevertheless, Secretary Kennedy has long pushed the narrative that vaccines cause autism. For example, in July 2023, Secretary Kennedy told Jesse Waters on *Fox News*, "I do believe that autism does come from vaccines."⁹⁵ In 2005, he also wrote an article linking autism to thimerosal, which the magazine later retracted.⁹⁶ Then, during a speech at an AutismOne conference in 2013, Secretary Kennedy made inflammatory comments about vaccine scientists, asking: "Is it hyperbole when I say these people should be in jail? They should be in jail and the key should be thrown away."⁹⁷

Secretary Kennedy promised during two separate cabinet meetings – on April 10, 2025 and on August 26, 2025 – that the cause(s) of autism would be released in September 2025. Specifically, at the August cabinet meeting, Secretary Kennedy said: "We will have announcements as promised in September, finding interventions, certain interventions, now that are clearly, almost certainly, causing autism."⁹⁸ Secretary Kennedy has said the National Institutes of Health (NIH) would take the lead on studying the link between autism and "environmental toxins," even though he stripped funding from ongoing scientific research into the causes of autism.⁹⁹ The \$50

⁹² Immunize.org, *MMR Vaccine Does Not Cause Autism*, (May 22, 2023) <https://www.immunize.org/wp-content/uploads/catg.d/p4026.pdf>.

⁹³ Anders Hviid, Jørgen Vinslöv Hansen, Morten Frisch, et al., *Measles, Mumps, Rubella Vaccination and Autism: A Nationwide Cohort Study*, *Ann Intern Med*, (Apr. 16, 2019) 170(8):513-520 doi: 10.7326/M18-2101.

⁹⁴ Immunization Safety Review Committee, *Immunization Safety Review: Vaccines and Autism*, Institute of Medicine and National Academies Press (2004) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK25349/>.

⁹⁵ Jesse Watters Primetime, *Robert F. Kennedy Jr.: Fauci 'caused a lot of injury'*, Fox News Channel, (July 10, 2023) <https://www.foxnews.com/video/6330950198112> at 1:21.

⁹⁶ Matthew Herper, *Why Salon's Autism Retraction Matters*, Forbes, (Jan. 18, 2011) <https://www.forbes.com/sites/matthewherper/2011/01/18/why-salons-autism-retraction-matters/>.

⁹⁷ Brandy Zadrozny, *RFK Jr. attacked the CDC's 'fascism' and likened vaccinating children to abuse by the Catholic Church*, NBC News, (Nov. 27, 2024) <https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/rfk-jr-vaccines-cdc-fascism-abuse-catholic-church-autism-conference-s-rcna181605>.

⁹⁸ Sarah Oweremohle, *Kennedy said there will be autism answers this month. With public health agencies in upheaval, autism advocates are alarmed*, CNN, (Sept. 4, 2025) <https://www.cnn.com/2025/09/04/health/kennedy-autism-public-health>.

⁹⁹ Robin Respaut, Ahmed Aboulenein and Julie Steenhuisen, *Exclusive: Kennedy's autism data project draws more than 100 research proposals, sources say*, Reuters, (Sept. 2, 2025) <https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/kennedys-autism-data-project-draws-more-than-100-research-proposals-sources-say-2025-09-02/>; Sharon Lerner, *RFK Jr. Vowed to Find the Environmental Causes of*

million in new NIH grant funding under Secretary Kennedy's Autism Data Science Initiative has not been awarded yet, and the proposed studies will take two or three years to complete.¹⁰⁰ Thus, it is unclear what exactly Secretary Kennedy plans to announce this month, and what evidence he plans to use to support his findings.

Regardless of what Secretary Kennedy announces in September, there is widespread reporting that existing vaccine safety records are under review at HHS and CDC. President Trump's senior-most officials have already told the public what Secretary Kennedy wants to do with vaccine safety data. In October 2024, long after Kennedy endorsed Trump, Howard Lutnick, who was the co-chair of Trump's transition team and is currently the Secretary of Commerce, said that Kennedy wanted to use this data to demonstrate vaccines are unsafe and pull them off the market: "He wants the data so he can say these things are unsafe [...] He says, if you give me the data, all I want is the data and I'll take on the data and show that it's not safe. And then if you pull the product liability, the companies will yank these vaccines right off the market. So that's his point."¹⁰¹

One of the people allegedly involved in this review is David Geier. Mr. Geier is a widely discredited vaccine skeptic who has no medical training. His previous studies purporting to demonstrate a link between vaccination and autism have been cited as "worthless," and described as "fatally flawed" and "completely invalid" by courts of law and scientists.¹⁰² A judge said in 2016 that Mr. Geier's report was, "neither useful nor relevant, because he is not qualified as an expert concerning the matters he discusses."¹⁰³ In a report reviewing scientific evidence related to vaccine safety, the IOM repeatedly referred to Mr. Geier's work as "uninterpretable," noting his studies have "serious methodological flaws" and "nontransparent" analytical methods.¹⁰⁴

Autism. Then He Shut Down Research Trying to Do Just That., ProPublica, (Aug. 20, 2025)

<https://www.propublica.org/article/rfk-jr-autism-environment-research-funding>.

¹⁰⁰ Division of Program Coordination, Planning, and Strategic Initiatives, *Research Opportunity Announcement (ROA): OTA-25-006 Autism Data Science initiative*, National Institutes of Health, (May 27, 2025)

<https://dpcpsi.nih.gov/autism-data-science-initiative/funding-opportunities>; Sarah Oweremohle, *Kennedy said there will be autism answers this month. With public health agencies in upheaval, autism advocates are alarmed*, CNN, (Sept. 4, 2025) <https://www.cnn.com/2025/09/04/health/kennedy-autism-public-health>.

¹⁰¹ Brandy Zadrozny, *RFK Jr. attacked the CDC's 'fascism' and likened vaccinating children to abuse by the Catholic Church*, NBC News, (Nov. 27, 2024)

<https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/rfk-jr-vaccines-cdc-fascism-abuse-catholic-church-autism-conference-s-rcna181605>; Maggie Astor and Apoorva Mandavilli, *Trump's Transition Team Head Says R.F.K. Jr. Converted Him to Vaccine Skeptic*, The New York Times, (Oct. 31, 2024)

<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/10/31/us/politics/trump-rfk-jr-vaccine-skepticism.html>.

¹⁰² *Hooker v. U.S. Dep't of Health & Human Servs.*, No. 02-472V, slip op. at 1-37, (Fed. Cl. Spec. Mstr. Apr. 11, 2017); Jeffrey Morris (@jsm2334), X, (Mar. 26, 2025, 10:07 AM)

<https://x.com/jsm2334/status/1904898109412454650>.

¹⁰³ Christina Jewett, Emily Baumgaertner Nunn, and Sheryl Gay Stolberg, *Kennedy Turns to a Discredited Vaccine Skeptic for Autism Study*, The New York Times, (Mar. 27, 2025)

<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/27/health/rfk-jr-autism-vaccines.html>.

¹⁰⁴ Immunization Safety Review Committee, *Immunization Safety Review: Vaccines and Autism*, Institute of Medicine and National Academies Press (2004) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK25349/>.

Mr. Geier was also fined by the Maryland State Board of Physicians for practicing medicine without a license.¹⁰⁵ Alongside his father, Mr. Geier administered Lupron – a puberty-blocking drug that is used to treat prostate cancer and is not proven or FDA-approved to treat autism – to young children with autism, without proper informed consent or examination. Further, Mr. Geier’s father lost his medical license in Maryland due to these actions and others.¹⁰⁶

As of September 14, 2025, Mr. Geier was listed in the HHS Employee Directory as a “Senior Data Analyst” within the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Financial Resources.¹⁰⁷ There is extensive reporting, dating back to March 2025,¹⁰⁸ that Secretary Kennedy hired Mr. Geier to study the link between autism and vaccines.¹⁰⁹ Dr. Jernigan, whose department within the CDC oversaw vaccine safety, has publicly expressed concerns about the work he was being asked to do with Mr. Geier. Specifically, Dr. Jernigan claims he was being asked to reanalyze data that dozens of studies have already examined, none of which found a connection between vaccines and autism. According to *The New York Times*, he believes Mr. Geier “seemed to already have a conclusion in mind.”¹¹⁰ He told *The Washington Post*: “We have been asked to revise and to review and change studies that have been settled in the past, findings that were there to help guide vaccine decisions.”¹¹¹

Notably, Dr. Jernigan told *Reuters* that Lyn Redwood was also involved in the push to revise long-established findings about vaccine safety.¹¹² Ms. Redwood is another prominent vaccine

¹⁰⁵ Carole J. Catalfo, *In the Matter of David A. Geier Final Decision and Order – Case Nos. 2008-0022 & 2009-0318*, Maryland State Board of Physicians, (July 30, 2012) <https://www.mbp.state.md.us/BPOAPP/orders/GeierOrder07.302.pdf>.

¹⁰⁶ Carole J. Catalfo, *In the Matter of Mark R. Geier Final Decision and Order – Case Nos. 2007-0083, 2008-0454, 2009-0308*, Maryland State Board of Physicians, (Aug. 22, 2012) <https://www.mbp.state.md.us/BPOAPP/orders/d2425008.222.pdf>; Erika Edwards and Brandy Zadrozny, *HHS taps anti-vaccine activist to look at debunked links between autism and vaccines, sources say*, NBC News, (Mar. 26, 2025) <https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/hhs-taps-anti-vaccine-activist-look-debunked-links-autism-vaccines-sou-rcna198214>.

¹⁰⁷ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Employee Directory, *David Geier*, (Accessed Sept. 14, 2025); screenshot on file with the Committee.

¹⁰⁸ Erika Edwards and Brandy Zadrozny, *HHS taps anti-vaccine activist to look at debunked links between autism and vaccines, sources say*, NBC News, (Mar. 26, 2025) <https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/hhs-taps-anti-vaccine-activist-look-debunked-links-autism-vaccines-sou-rcna198214>.

¹⁰⁹ Sheryl Gay Stolberg, Apoorva Mandavilli, and Christina Jewett, *White House Says New C.D.C. Director Is Fired, but She Refuses to Leave*, *The New York Times*, (Aug. 27, 2025) <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/08/27/health/cdc-monarez-kennedy-vaccines.html>; Liz Essley Whyte and Dominique Mosbergen, *Vaccine Opponent Hired by RFK Jr. Scours Official Records for Link to Autism*, *The Wall Street Journal*, (June 5, 2025) <https://www.wsj.com/health/healthcare/vaccine-opponent-hired-by-rfk-jr-scours-official-records-for-link-to-autism-a1091eb4>.

¹¹⁰ Sheryl Gay Stolberg, Apoorva Mandavilli, and Christina Jewett, *Kennedy Sought to Fire C.D.C. Director Over Vaccine Policy*, *The New York Times*, (Aug. 28, 2025) <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/08/28/health/rfk-jr-susan-monarez-cdc-vaccines.html>.

¹¹¹ Lena H. Sun, Lauren Weber and David Ovalle, *CDC leaders who resigned said RFK Jr. undermined vaccine science, risking lives*, *The Washington Post*, (Updated Aug. 28, 2025) <https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2025/08/28/rfk-cdc-director-susan-monarez-fired/>.

¹¹² Leah Douglas, Dan Levine, and Julie Steenhuysen, “Do no harm”: Why three CDC officials left over vaccine policy, *Reuters*, (Aug. 28, 2025)

skeptic. She is a former leader of Children's Health Defense, Secretary Kennedy's former non-profit that has been widely criticized for its views and rhetoric on vaccines, and is a co-founder of the Coalition for SafeMinds, an advocacy group that focuses on the purported link between thimerosal and autism.¹¹³ As of September 14, 2025, Ms. Redwood is listed in the HHS Employee Directory as an "Expert" within HHS's Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health.¹¹⁴

Despite vast reporting related to this topic, in an exchange with Senator Lujan, Secretary Kennedy denied that Mr. Geier is "conducting" or "participating in" any study. He also denied Mr. Geier is "doing any analysis" related to the forthcoming autism studies.

Excerpt on p. 112:

Senator Lujan: "You said that you're soon going to release a study claiming to reveal the cause of autism, timed unsurprisingly with the upcoming ACIP meeting to justify taking vaccines from Americans. Now, as you know, autism affects millions of children, so I guess you'd have the nation's top medical experts working on this. Mr. Kennedy, you hired a man named David Geier to conduct this study. Is that correct?"

Secretary Kennedy: "No."

Senator Lujan: "Is Mr. David Geier working for HHS?"

Secretary Kennedy: "He's a contractor, but he's not conducting a study."

Excerpt on p. 115:

Senator Lujan: "You brought [Geier] in to do this [autism] study. I think there's no question about it."

Secretary Kennedy: "I told you he's not doing a study."

Senator Lujan: "Is he participating in the study?"

Secretary Kennedy: "No. What he's doing--"

Senator Lujan: "Is he doing any analysis in regards to this study?"

<https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/do-no-harm-why-three-cdc-officials-left-over-vaccine-policy-2025-08-28/>.

¹¹³ Will McDuffie and Jade Cobern, *RFK Jr. appoints longtime anti-vaccine ally Lyn Redwood to HHS position*, ABC News, (June 25, 2025)

<https://abcnews.go.com/US/rfk-jr-appoints-longtime-anti-vaccine-ally-lyn/story?id=123213887>.

¹¹⁴ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Employee Directory, *Lyn Redwood*, (Accessed Sept. 14, 2025); screenshot on file with the Committee.

Secretary Kennedy: "No. What he's doing is getting access to the Vaccine Safety Datalink, which is the biggest repository for vaccine information that your friend would not give us for seven months, for seven months."

However, Secretary Kennedy acknowledged that Mr. Geier has access to the Vaccine Safety Datalink (VSD), a database that contains millions of Americans' health care information. In other forums, Secretary Kennedy has said Mr. Geier is helping to search for "lost" VSD data,¹¹⁵ which appeared to be connected to Secretary Kennedy's long-held conspiracy theory that VSD data is being concealed.¹¹⁶ Mr. Geier has previously been barred from accessing the VSD because he misrepresented how he planned to use the data.¹¹⁷ The IOM referred to his past work involving VSD data in the following manner: "Dr. Geier [Mr. Geier's father] and Mr. Geier presented to the committee an unpublished analysis of the VSD data. Only one slide depicted this information, and it demonstrated an increasing relationship between autism relative risk and amount of thimerosal. The basis of this calculation was not provided and additional data and methods were not described. Overall, the committee found the results of their analyses using VSD data uninterpretable."¹¹⁸

In the same exchange with Senator Lujan, Secretary Kennedy also seemed to dispute the legitimacy of the Maryland State Board of Physicians' charges against Mr. Geier. He claimed the Board was fined for acting with malice against Mr. Geier. However, this fine was actually a judgement related to the Board's disclosure of prescriptions Mr. Geier's father wrote for members of their family. The judgement against the Board was overturned by a court of appeal.¹¹⁹ Mr. Geier's highly unethical actions with respect to children with autism, and the charges brought against him for practicing without a medical license, do not appear to be in dispute.

Excerpt on p. 114:

Senator Lujan: "Did you know that [Geier] got caught in Maryland and was charged for practicing medicine without a medical license?"

¹¹⁵ Elizabeth Weil, *The Father-Son Duo Who Toppled Trust in Vaccines*, New York Magazine, (July 17, 2025) <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/article/anti-vax-vaccine-movement-rfk-jr-david-mark-geier.html>.

¹¹⁶ Brandy Zadrozny, *The little-known database at the heart of Kennedy's vaccine conspiracy theory*, NBC News, (Apr. 30, 2025) <https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/kennedy-vaccine-safety-datalink-conspiracy-theory-rcna203411>.

¹¹⁷ Liz Essley Whyte and Dominique Mosbergen, *Vaccine Opponent Hired by RFK Jr. Scours Official Records for Link to Autism*, The Wall Street Journal, (June 5, 2025) <https://www.wsj.com/health/healthcare/vaccine-opponent-hired-by-rfk-jr-scours-official-records-for-link-to-autism-a1091eb4>.

¹¹⁸ Immunization Safety Review Committee, *Immunization Safety Review: Vaccines and Autism*, Institute of Medicine and National Academies Press (2004) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK25349/>.

¹¹⁹ *Board of Physicians v. Geier*, No. 338, Sept. Term 2018, slip op. (Md. Ct. Spec. App. June 26, 2019) https://www.courtlistener.com/pdf/2019/06/26/bd_of_physicians_v_geier.pdf; Heather Cobun, *Appeals court overturns \$2.5M judgment against Board of Physicians*, The Daily Record, (June 27, 2019) <https://thedailyrecord.com/2019/06/27/geier-board-of-physicians-cosa/>.

Secretary Kennedy: "He was charged by a medical board. He sued the medical board, and the medical board was found to have acted in actual malice and was fined \$2.6 million by a judge in Maryland for doing that."

Beyond the information stated above, little to nothing is known publicly about how Mr. Geier is using VSD data, what research questions he or his colleagues at HHS are studying, and the methodologies or protocols related to studies connected to his work. Dr. Jernigan told *The New Yorker* that he "could not get assurances on what science approach they were going to use to reevaluate all of these data that have already been evaluated," further noting that he could not say whether Mr. Geier's current work for HHS will be scientifically sound because "we don't have the protocols."¹²⁰

Toward the end of Senator Lujan's exchange with Secretary Kennedy about Mr. Geier, Senator Lujan asked the Secretary to make the protocols for "the autism study" public. Secretary Kennedy insisted that they already are public. However, virtually no information about any studies Mr. Geier is contributing to have been made public. It is possible Secretary Kennedy was referring to NIH studies under the Autism Data Science Initiative, but that appears to be unrelated to Mr. Geier's VSD work.

Excerpt on p. 118:

Senator Lujan: "Mr. Secretary, will you commit to sharing the protocols used for the autism study with Congress and to the public?"

Secretary Kennedy: "They are public."

The public deserves more answers about the nature and scientific rigor of Mr. Geier's work, especially since findings related to his work may be used as a rationale for future vaccine-related policies and decisions.

¹²⁰ Charles Bethea, *Inside the Chaos at the C.D.C.*, *The New Yorker*, (Sept. 9, 2025) <https://www.newyorker.com/news/the-lede/inside-the-chaos-at-the-cdc>.

Secretary Kennedy's Testimony on Vaccines

Vaccines are among the greatest public health and medical innovations of all time. The evidence is clear: vaccines save lives. One study estimated that the World Health Organization's global vaccine efforts have averted 154 million deaths, including 146 million among children under age five, over the last 50 years.¹²¹ That translates to a remarkable six lives saved every minute of every day of every year.¹²² Not only do vaccines save lives, they prevent millions of people from suffering long-term effects of serious illnesses which in turn saves money across the entire health care system. Without proper vaccination uptake, people die from vaccine-preventable diseases. The most severe risks are borne by infants, children, vulnerable seniors, and immunocompromised individuals.

Secretary Kennedy's views on vaccines were central to his Finance Committee confirmation hearing on January 29, 2025. Then-nominee Kennedy repeatedly reassured Senators that he would "do nothing as HHS Secretary that makes it difficult or discourages people from taking vaccines."¹²³ He repeated that phrase 37 times in written responses to Senators' questions for the record, including in response to questions about whether he would commit to support the CDC Director's independent judgment on ACIP decisions, direct the CDC Director to unilaterally reject ACIP recommendations, seek to replace current ACIP committee members, direct ACIP members to resign so he could pick their replacements, and ensure that all vaccines currently recommended by the CDC would remain covered without cost-sharing.¹²⁴

Senators on both sides of the aisle have now expressed serious concerns that Secretary Kennedy is not following through on the assurances he provided Congress related to vaccines. Since his confirmation, Secretary Kennedy has taken steps to reduce patient access to vaccines and undermine vaccine-related science and research. He has eroded confidence in the nation's vaccine recommendations, gutted vital vaccine research, forced scientists with vital expertise out of HHS, and allowed measles to proliferate. The Secretary's actions on vaccines have serious consequences, and they were not carried out with the "radical transparency" or adherence to "gold standard science" that Kennedy promised during his confirmation process and continues to falsely claim are emblematic of his leadership of HHS.

Throughout his tenure, Secretary Kennedy has also made numerous statements sowing fear and distrust of vaccines, many of which have been repeatedly refuted by scientific evidence. During the September Finance Committee hearing, he repeated many of these claims:

¹²¹ Andrew Shattock, Helen Johnson, So Yoon Sim, et al., *Contribution of vaccination to improved survival and health: modelling 50 years of the Expanded Programme on Immunization*, *The Lancet*, (May 25, 2024) Vol. 403, Issue 10441, 2307-2316) [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(24\)00850-X/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(24)00850-X/fulltext).

¹²² Vaccine Education Center, *The Impact of Vaccines*, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, (Mar, 31, 2025) <https://www.chop.edu/vaccine-education-center/science-history/vaccine-history/impact-of-vaccines>.

¹²³ U.S. Senate Committee on Finance, *Hearing to Consider the Nomination of Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., of California, to be Secretary of Health and Human Services*, (Jan. 29, 2025) <https://www.finance.senate.gov/hearings/hearingto-consider-the-nomination-of-robert-f-kennedy-jr-of-california-to-be-secretary-of-health-and-human-services>.

¹²⁴ U.S. Senate Committee on Finance, *Hearing to Consider the Nomination of Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., of California, to be Secretary of Health and Human Services – Responses to Questions for the Record*, (Jan. 31, 2025) https://www.finance.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/responses_to_questions_for_the_record_to_robert_f_kennedy_jrpart_2.pdf.

- Secretary Kennedy misrepresented the safety of mRNA technology, the central scientific achievement of President Trump’s Operation Warp Speed. He refused to try to quantify the number of lives saved by COVID-19 vaccines developed under President Trump’s leadership, and instead repeated widely refuted claims that COVID-19 vaccines are dangerous.
- Secretary Kennedy also misrepresented the strength of the clinical data and scientific evidence supporting the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines. He suggested there is a dearth of data supporting the use of these vaccines among certain populations, including healthy children, when in fact COVID-19 vaccines have been rigorously tested in both pre- and post-market settings.
- Secretary Kennedy also made statements casting doubt on the safety of other vaccines. He indulged in conspiracy theories embraced by the anti-vaccine community, continued to suggest there is a link between vaccines and autism despite overwhelming scientific consensus to the contrary, and cast doubt on the integrity of the childhood vaccine schedule.

The following sections provide a detailed accounting of the claims Secretary Kennedy made about vaccines during the September Finance Committee hearing.

I. Claims Misrepresenting the Safety of mRNA and COVID-19 Vaccines

Throughout the September Finance Committee hearing, Secretary Kennedy made seemingly inconsistent statements related to his views on COVID-19 vaccines. Secretary Kennedy agreed that President Trump deserves a Nobel Prize for his work to develop COVID-19 vaccines under Operation Warp Speed. Over the course of the hearing, however, Secretary Kennedy refused to say how many lives were saved by the vaccines. On the contrary, he made multiple assertions suggesting that COVID-19 vaccines cause death and injury, including for children.

In May 2020, President Trump spearheaded an unprecedented public-private partnership to develop vaccines and therapeutics to protect Americans and people around the world against COVID-19. This effort, called Operation Warp Speed, has been widely hailed as one of the most significant medical achievements in recent history.¹²⁵ President Trump noted that he was “very proud of it,” further noting that “Operation Warp Speed is unequalled and unrivaled anywhere in the world... No medical breakthrough of this scope and magnitude has ever been achieved this rapidly.”¹²⁶ Operation Warp Speed set-out to deliver 300 million doses of a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine by January 2021. As a result of these efforts, and building on decades of federally funded research, Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna-produced vaccines received FDA authorization in late 2020. Both companies leveraged revolutionary mRNA technology in these

¹²⁵ Mark Gollom, *Why Trump's Operation Warp Speed is credited with helping race for COVID-19 vaccine*, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, (Nov. 19, 2020)

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/health/operation-warp-speed-trump-pfizer-moderna-vaccine-1.5806820>.

¹²⁶ The White House, *Remarks by President Trump During an Update on Operation Warp Speed*, (Nov. 13, 2020) <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-update-operation-warp-speed/>.

vaccines, enabling the manufacturers to quickly design and produce vaccines once the virus' genetic code was sequenced. As Senator Cassidy said, Operation Warp Speed "saved millions of lives globally. Trillions of dollars. We reopened the economy. An incredible accomplishment."¹²⁷

During the Finance Committee hearing, however, Secretary Kennedy repeatedly refused to answer questions about the extent to which the COVID-19 vaccines developed under Operation Warp Speed saved lives, citing "data chaos" as the reason he could not provide a response.

Excerpt on p. 47-48:

Senator Warner: "Do you accept the fact that a million Americans died from COVID?"

Secretary Kennedy: "I don't know how many died."

Senator Warner: "You're the Secretary of Health and Human Services. You don't have any idea how many Americans died from COVID?"

Secretary Kennedy: "I don't think anybody knows that because there was so much data chaos coming out of CDC and there was so many --"

Senator Warner: "You don't know the answer of how many Americans died from COVID. This is the Secretary of Health and Human Services. Do you think the vaccine did anything to prevent additional deaths?"

Secretary Kennedy: "Again, I would like to see the data and talk about the data."

Senator Warner: "You've had this job for eight months and you don't know the data about whether the vaccine saved lives?"

Secretary Kennedy: "No, and that's the problem, is that they didn't have the data. The data by the Biden administration, absolutely dismal, data chaos."

Excerpt on p. 57:

Senator Hassan: "Assuming it is a monumental achievement, you've said it was, is it true that as President Trump has said, he saved millions of American lives with the COVID-19 vaccine, because you've just expressed great confusion about that to Senator Warner."

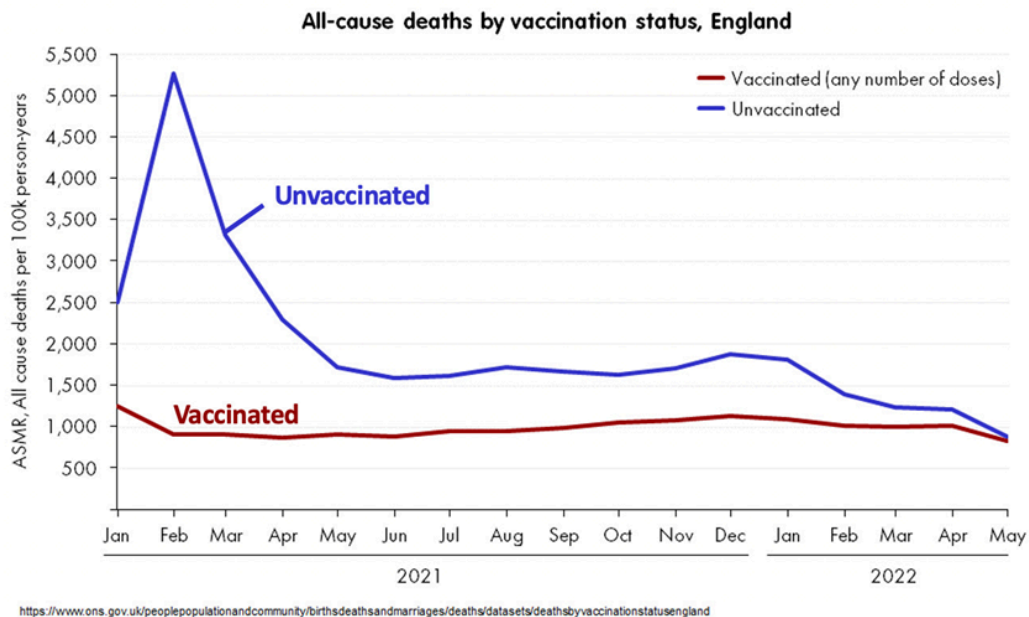
¹²⁷ Seung Min Kim and Meg Kinnard, *Operation Warp Speed was one of Trump's biggest achievements. Then came RFK Jr. and vaccine skeptics*, AP via ABC News, (Sept. 5, 2025) <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/wireStory/operation-warp-speed-trumps-biggest-achievements-rfk-jr-125280158>.

Secretary Kennedy: "The only confusion I expressed is exactly how many lives were saved. I don't think anybody knows that because [of] the data chaos."

Excerpt on p. 110:

Secretary Kennedy: "Did it save a million lives? Well, there's no data to support that. Or maybe data -- you know, there's -- there's no study that -- there's modeling studies. There's faulty data. I'm not going to sign on to something if I can't make -- do it to a scientific certainty. It doesn't mean that I'm, you know, anti-vax. It just means that I'm pro-science."

CDC surveillance data shows over one million Americans have died of COVID-19, which has been confirmed by independent analyses and death certificates.¹²⁸



In addition, numerous studies demonstrate that the COVID-19 vaccines developed under Operation Warp Speed have saved “tens of millions of lives” around the world¹²⁹ and prevented millions of hospitalizations. In the United States, by December 2022, COVID-19 vaccines saved approximately 3.2 million lives, prevented 18.5 million hospitalizations, and prevented 120

¹²⁸ National Center for Health Statistics, *Provisional COVID-19 Mortality Surveillance*, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, (Last Reviewed Sept. 11, 2025) <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/vsrr/covid19/index.htm>; Doug Donovan, *U.S. Officially Surpasses 1 Million COVID-19 Deaths*, Johns Hopkins University & School of Medicine – Coronavirus Resource Center, (May 17, 2022) <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/from-our-experts/u-s-officially-surpasses-1-million-covid-19-deaths>.

¹²⁹ Oliver Watson, Gregory Barnsley, Jaspreet Toor, et al., *Global impact of the first year of COVID-19 vaccination: a mathematical modelling study*, *The Lancet Infectious Diseases*, (June 23, 2022) Vol. 22, Issue 9, 1293-1302 [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1473-3099\(22\)00320-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1473-3099(22)00320-6).

million COVID-19 infections.¹³⁰ The United Kingdom also analyzed deaths from all causes during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and compared death rates by vaccination status, which showed death rates were consistently lower among the vaccinated population (see graph above).¹³¹

At other points in the hearing, Secretary Kennedy said mRNA vaccines cause serious harm and death. For example, Senators Bennet and Tillis asked Secretary Kennedy if he agreed with assertions by one of the new ACIP members, Dr. Retsef Levy, that “evidence is mounting and indisputable that mRNA vaccines cause serious harm, including death, especially among young people.” The Secretary said he agreed with Dr. Levy in response to both Senators.

Excerpt on p. 31:

Senator Bennet: "Are you aware that another one of these new [ACIP] members, Dr. Levy, wrote that, quote, 'Evidence is mounting and indisputable that mRNA vaccines cause serious harm, including death, especially among young people.' Yes or no, are you aware that he said that?"

Secretary Kennedy: "I wasn't aware he said it, but I think -- I agree with it."

Excerpt on p. 99:

Senator Tillis: "Apparently in the exchange with Senator Bennet, you said you agreed with Dr. Levy's statements who said that the mRNA vaccine causes serious -- causes serious harm including death, particularly in young people. They said you agreed with that comment. Did you agree with that comment or not?"

Secretary Kennedy: "I think that's true, yes."

Many studies have demonstrated the safety of mRNA vaccines, including studies analyzing adverse events in both the elderly and children.¹³² The clinical trials for the

¹³⁰ Meagan Fitzpatrick, Seyed Moghadas, Abhishek Pandey, and Alison Galvani, *Two Years of U.S. COVID-19 Vaccines Have Prevented Millions of Hospitalizations and Deaths*, The Commonwealth Fund, (Dec. 13, 2022) <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/blog/2022/two-years-covid-vaccines-prevented-millions-deaths-hospitalization> S.

¹³¹ Katelyn Jetelina and Kristen Panthagani, *COVID-19 vaccines and sudden deaths: Separating fact from fiction*, Your Local Epidemiologist, (Jan. 17, 2023) <https://yourlocalepidemiologist.substack.com/p/covid-19-vaccines-and-sudden-deaths>.

¹³² Jonathan Wosen, *How do we know mRNA vaccines are safe and effective? An explainer*, Stat, (May 21, 2025) <https://www.statnews.com/2025/05/21/mrna-vaccines-safety-efficacy-senate-committee-probe-myocarditis-adverse-events-covid-shots/>; Nicola Klein, Ned Lewis, Kristin Goddard, et al., *Surveillance for Adverse Events After COVID-19 mRNA Vaccination*, JAMA. 2021;326(14):1390–1399 doi:10.1001/jama.2021.15072; Daniel Harris, Kaleen Hayes, Andrew Zullo, et al., *Comparative Risks of Potential Adverse Events Following COVID-19 mRNA Vaccination Among Older US Adults*, JAMA Network Open. 2023;6(8):e2326852 doi:10.1001/jama.2023.26852; Anne Hause, Paige Marquez, Bicheng Zhang, et al., *Safety Monitoring of mRNA COVID-19 Vaccine Third Doses*

Moderna¹³³ and Pfizer¹³⁴ COVID-19 vaccines did not find serious safety signals. More than 13 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines have been administered around the world, with outcomes being continually monitored through various surveillance programs.¹³⁵ In the United States, both the CDC and the FDA also monitor outcomes for tens of millions of people and have not identified evidence of widespread harm.¹³⁶

Myocarditis, which is inflammation of the heart muscle, is a rare adverse event of mRNA COVID-19 vaccination. Myocarditis varies significantly in terms of severity, with some cases being asymptomatic.¹³⁷ A 2022 CDC study found that myocarditis occurred at a rate of 22 to 36 per 100,000 males between age 12 and 17 after their second dose.¹³⁸ Another study found that out of over 3.9 million who received a COVID-19 vaccine booster, there were only 28 probable or confirmed cases of myocarditis, all of which were clinically mild.¹³⁹ Importantly, contracting a COVID-19 infection carries a higher risk of myocarditis than vaccination, and myocarditis cases tend to be more severe among people who are unvaccinated.¹⁴⁰

Despite the numerous studies reaffirming their safety, Secretary Kennedy has previously referred to the COVID-19 vaccine as the “deadliest vaccine ever made,”¹⁴¹ which Senator Sanders pressed him on during the hearing. In the past, Secretary Kennedy also reportedly told *NBC News* that COVID-19 vaccines killed more people than they

Among Children Aged 6 Months–5 Years — United States, June 17, 2022–May 7, 2023, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, (June 9, 2023) <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/72/wr/mm7223a2.htm>.

¹³³ Novel Coronavirus Research Compendium, *Efficacy and Safety of the mRNA-1273 SARS-CoV-2 Vaccine*, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, (Jan. 11, 2021) <https://ncrc.jhsph.edu/research/efficacy-and-safety-of-the-mrna-1273-sars-cov-2-vaccine/>.

¹³⁴ Novel Coronavirus Research Compendium, *Safety and Efficacy of the BNT162b2 mRNA Covid-19 Vaccine*, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, (Dec. 14, 2020) <https://ncrc.jhsph.edu/research/safety-and-efficacy-of-the-bnt162b2-mrna-covid-19-vaccine/>.

¹³⁵ World Health Organization, *COVID-19 advice for the public: Getting vaccinated*, (Oct. 8, 2024) <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/covid-19-vaccines/advice>.

¹³⁶ Sarah Meyer, *Update on CDC’s COVID-19 Vaccine Safety Monitoring*, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – Immunization Safety Office, (June 25, 2025) <https://www.cdc.gov/acip/downloads/slides-2025-06-25-26/04-Meyer-COVID-508.pdf>.

¹³⁷ Mark Drazner, Biykem Bozkurt, Leslie Cooper, et al., *2024 ACC Expert Consensus Decision Pathway on Strategies and Criteria for the Diagnosis and Management of Myocarditis*, American College of Cardiology Solution Set Oversight Committee, (Dec. 10, 2024) *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*, Vol. 85 No. 5 Iss. 4 391-431 doi:10.1016/j.jacc.2024.10.080.

¹³⁸ Jason Block, Tegan Boehmer, Christopher Forrest, et al., *Cardiac Complications After SARS-CoV-2 Infection and mRNA COVID-19 Vaccination — PCORnet, United States, January 2021–January 2022*, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, (Apr. 8, 2022) [cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/mm7114e1.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/mm7114e1.htm).

¹³⁹ Dror Mevorach, Emilia Anis, Noa Cedar, et al., *Myocarditis After BNT162b2 COVID-19 Third Booster Vaccine in Israel*, *Circulation*, (Sep. 6, 2022) 146(10):802-804 doi: 10.1161/CIRCULATIONAHA.122.060961.

¹⁴⁰ Navya Voleti, Surya Prakash Reddy, and Paddy Ssentongo, *Myocarditis in SARS-CoV-2 infection vs. COVID-19 vaccination: A systematic review and meta-analysis*, *Frontiers in Cardiovascular Medicines* (Aug. 29, 2022; 9:951313) doi:10.3389/fcvm.2022.951314; American Heart Association, *Myocarditis risk significantly higher after COVID-19 infection vs. after a COVID-19 vaccine*, (Aug. 22, 2022) <https://newsroom.heart.org/news/myocarditis-risk-significantly-higher-after-covid-19-infection-vs-after-a-covid-19-vaccine>.

¹⁴¹ Lauren Weber, Lena Sun, and David Ovalle, *10 RFK Jr. conspiracy theories and false claims, in his own words*, *The Washington Post*, (Nov. 15, 2024) <https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2024/11/15/rfk-jr-views-conspiracies-false-claims/>.

saved.¹⁴² In 2021, Secretary Kennedy told lawmakers in Louisiana that there are “more people who have died in eight months from this vaccine than from 72 vaccines over the last 30 years.”¹⁴³ These claims have repeatedly been disproven.¹⁴⁴ Secretary Kennedy also claimed during the September hearing and elsewhere that Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) data supports his statements. In an exchange with Senator Marshall, Secretary Kennedy noted that VAERS has more reports of injuries and deaths from the COVID-19 vaccine than all other vaccines in history combined.

Excerpt on p. 92-93:

Senator Sanders: “President Trump, who I don't usually agree with, called COVID vaccines, quote, one of the greatest miracles in the history of modern-day medicine that saved tens of millions of lives worldwide. Scientific community agrees with Trump. Lancet study found that it prevented almost 20 million deaths during their first year of use. Secretary Kennedy, is President Trump and the medical community right, or do you still believe that the COVID vaccine was, quote, the deadliest vaccine ever made?”

Secretary Kennedy: “First of all, I didn't say that -- I said that in terms of [VAERS] reports a while ago. I said today, I think that President Trump should get the Nobel Prize for Operation Warp Speed.”

Excerpt on p. 109:

Secretary Kennedy: “There were more reports to VAERS, which is the only surveillance system that we have, of injuries and deaths from that [COVID] vaccine than all vaccines put together in history.”

Secretary Kennedy’s claims related to VAERS are highly misleading. VAERS is a passive reporting system. Anyone can submit reports to VAERS, and these reports are not verified for accuracy or whether the adverse event reported was actually caused by a vaccine. VAERS includes a wide range of adverse events, from pain and redness at an injection site to permanent disability or death.¹⁴⁵ Rather, the purpose of VAERS is to help analysts identify early warning

¹⁴² Brandy Zadrozny, *The conspiracy candidate: What RFK Jr.'s anti-vaccine crusade could look like in the White House*, NBC News, (June 19, 2023)

<https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/2024-election/rfk-jr-anti-vaccine-push-white-house-rcna89470>.

¹⁴³ Samantha Putterman, *No, the COVID-19 vaccine is not the “deadliest vaccine ever made,”* PolitiFact, (Dec. 10, 2021)

<https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2021/dec/10/robert-f-kennedy-jr/no-covid-19-vaccine-not-deadliest-vaccine-ever-made/>.

¹⁴⁴ *Id.*; Hannah Hudnall, *RFK Jr. and vaccines: A history of false and misleading claims*, USA Today, (Dec. 18, 2024) <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/factcheck/2024/12/18/rfk-jr-vaccines-misinformation-fact-check/76943652007/>.

¹⁴⁵ U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *About the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS)*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, (Aug. 7, 2024) <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccine-safety-systems/vaers/index.html>.

signs of possible issues linked to vaccines that should be studied further.¹⁴⁶ As stated on the HHS VAERS website: “Just because an adverse event happened after a person received a vaccine does not mean the vaccine caused the adverse event. VAERS accepts reports of adverse events following vaccination without judging the cause or seriousness of the event. VAERS is not designed to determine if a vaccine caused an adverse event.”¹⁴⁷ VAERS is also not the only surveillance system in the United States that monitors vaccine safety and outcomes. CDC’s VSD and FDA’s Sentinel system are just two other examples.

VAERS data is frequently used by vaccine skeptics to sow distrust in vaccines, including with respect to the COVID-19 vaccine.¹⁴⁸ VAERS reporting rates during the COVID-19 pandemic were exceptionally high due to the scale of the vaccination effort, the fact that additional adverse event reporting was mandatory for providers who administered the vaccines, and because people were likely very vigilant in reporting any potential event due to the novelty of the vaccine.¹⁴⁹ Thus, the existence of a large number of VAERS reports does not, unto itself, suggest COVID-19 vaccines are dangerous. It is not surprising for a vaccine rollout to yield higher reporting, a similar effect occurred during the rollout of the HPV vaccine.¹⁵⁰ *The Washington Post* is now reporting that unnamed HHS officials plan to make a presentation during the upcoming September ACIP meeting that appears to use VAERS data to link COVID-19 vaccines to the deaths of at least 25 children. These plans are reportedly alarming career scientists, and the methodology for the forthcoming analysis “was not immediately clear.”¹⁵¹ As noted above, numerous studies have reaffirmed COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective.

Given Secretary Kennedy’s views on mRNA vaccines, it is not entirely surprising that he chose to cancel \$500 million in grant funding from the Biomedical Advanced Research Development Authority (BARDA) supporting mRNA technology on August 5, 2025. As the rationale for this decision, Secretary Kennedy claimed that “mRNA technology poses more risk than benefits for these respiratory viruses.”¹⁵² Scientists referred to his statements about the risks of mRNA

¹⁴⁶ Amy Dusto, *What VAERS Is (And Isn’t)*, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, (May 3, 2022) <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/2022/what-vaers-is-and-isnt/>.

¹⁴⁷ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System – Frequently Asked Questions, (Accessed Sept. 12, 2025) <https://vaers.hhs.gov/faq.html>.

¹⁴⁸ Amy Dusto, *What VAERS Is (And Isn’t)*, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, (May 3, 2022) <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/2022/what-vaers-is-and-isnt/>; Meredith Wadman, *Antivaccine activists use a government database on side effects to scare the public*, *Science*, (May 26, 2021) <https://www.science.org/content/article/antivaccine-activists-use-government-database-side-effects-scare-public>; Jonathan Jarry, *Don’t Fall for the ‘VAERS Scare’ Tactic*, McGill Office for Science and Society, (June 18, 2021) <https://www.mcgill.ca/oss/article/covid-19-critical-thinking-health/dont-fall-vaers-scare-tactic>.

¹⁴⁹ Jessica McDonald, *Posts Mislead About COVID-19 Vaccine Safety With Out-of-Context Clip of FDA Official*, FactCheck.org, (Feb. 23, 2024) <https://www.factcheck.org/2024/02/posts-mislead-about-covid-19-vaccine-safety-with-out-of-context-clip-of-fda-official/>.

¹⁵⁰ Jan Eberth, Kimberly Kline, David Moskowitz, et al., *The role of media and the Internet on vaccine adverse event reporting: a case study of HPV vaccination*, *Journal of Adolescent Health* (Mar. 2014; 54(3):289-295) doi:10.1016/j.jadohealth.2013.09.005.

¹⁵¹ Lena Sun, Rachel Roubein and Dan Diamond, *Trump officials to link covid shots to child deaths, alarming career scientists*, *The Washington Post*, (Sept. 12, 2025) <https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2025/09/12/covid-vaccine-child-death-cdc/>.

¹⁵² Robert F. Kennedy Jr. (@SecKennedy), X, (Aug. 5, 2025, 5:55 PM) <https://x.com/SecKennedy/status/1952851097019633766>; David Lim, *Kennedy to halt \$500 million in vaccine*

technology as “wildly incorrect,” noting that mRNA technology has been very effective at preventing hospitalizations and deaths.^{153,154} When pressed about this decision by Senator Cantwell, Secretary Kennedy accused her of being wrong on her facts.

Excerpt on p. 43:

Senator Cantwell: "You cancelled \$500 million of research because the mRNA technology is about continuing the research to be ready for the next flu influenza, the next pandemic and you have to do the research. And we were --"

Secretary Kennedy: "I'm happy to have a detailed discussion with you about it. You're so wrong on your facts."

Traditional vaccines use weakened or inactivated forms of viruses or parts of pathogens to trigger immune responses. mRNA technology – arguably the crown jewel of President Trump’s Operation Warp Speed – instead uses mRNA synthesized in a lab to generate a specific immune response, which the body’s cells read to make a specific viral protein that then generates a specific immune response. Vaccines using mRNA technology can be developed and adapted to mutating virus strains much more quickly than other types of vaccines, which is why mRNA technology holds tremendous promise for facilitating faster and more effective responses to dangerous outbreaks and pandemics, as demonstrated by the COVID-19 vaccine, saving lives in the process.¹⁵⁵

Scientists said the decision to cut funding would weaken national security and the country’s ability to respond to future pandemics.¹⁵⁶ Senator Cassidy criticized the move as “conced[ing] to China an important technology needed to combat cancer and infectious disease.”¹⁵⁷ He went on to say that, “President Trump wants to Make America Healthy Again and Make America Great Again. This works against both of President Trump’s goals.” President Trump’s former Surgeon General Dr. Jerome Adams said, “this move is going to cost lives.”¹⁵⁸

II. Claims Misrepresenting the Clinical Data Supporting COVID-19 Vaccine Use

projects, Politico, (Aug. 5, 2025)

<https://www.politico.com/news/2025/08/05/hhs-plans-to-terminate-22-mrna-vaccine-projects-00494922>.

¹⁵³ Apoorva Mandavilli, *Kennedy Cancels Nearly \$500 Million in mRNA Vaccine Contracts*, The New York Times, (Aug. 5, 2025) <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/08/05/health/rfk-jr-vaccine-funding.html>.

¹⁵⁴ Mary Kekatos, *RFK Jr. cancels at least \$500M in mRNA vaccine funding. What are the implications?*, ABC News, (Aug. 6, 2025)

<https://abcnews.go.com/Health/rfk-jr-cancels-500m-mrna-vaccine-funding-implications/story?id=124406624>.

¹⁵⁵ Public Health On Call, *How Cuts to mRNA Vaccine Development Will Set the U.S. Back*, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, (Aug. 13, 2025)

<https://publichealth.jhu.edu/2025/risks-of-cuts-to-mrna-vaccine-development>.

¹⁵⁶ David Lim, *Kennedy to halt \$500 million in vaccine projects*, Politico, (Aug. 5, 2025)

<https://www.politico.com/news/2025/08/05/hhs-plans-to-terminate-22-mrna-vaccine-projects-00494922>.

¹⁵⁷ Sen. Bill Cassidy (@SenBillCassidy), X, (Aug. 6, 2025, 7:40 PM)

<https://x.com/senbillcassidy/status/1953239825353425174>.

¹⁵⁸ Jerome Adams (@JeromeAdamsMD), X, (Aug. 5, 2025, 9:32 PM)

<https://x.com/JeromeAdamsMD/status/1952905490662629640>.

Secretary Kennedy also made a number of false and misleading statements during the Finance Committee hearing related to the clinical data supporting COVID-19 vaccine use. For example, during questioning by Senator Warren, Secretary Kennedy asserted there is “no clinical data” supporting an FDA-approved indication for the COVID-19 vaccine in healthy people. This statement is false. There is extensive human data supporting the use of annual COVID-19 vaccines in healthy individuals, as described below. For example, one study in the *New England Journal of Medicine* involving over one million people found that updated COVID-19 vaccines provided 59 percent protection against hospitalization, which was significantly more effective than the original booster shots.¹⁵⁹

Excerpt on p. 85:

Secretary Kennedy: “[The COVID-19 vaccine is] not recommended for healthy people.”

Senator Warren: “No, no, if you don't recommend then the consequence of that in many states is that you can't walk into a pharmacy and get one. It means insurance companies don't have to cover the \$200 or so cost. As Senator, Dr. Cassidy said, you are effectively denying people vaccines.”

Secretary Kennedy: “We're not going to recommend a product for which there is no clinical data for that indication, which is that what I should be doing?”

Secretary Kennedy has also repeatedly claimed the COVID-19 vaccines have not undergone sufficient testing for kids. For example, in April 2025, he told *Fox News*¹⁶⁰ that COVID-19 vaccines pose a “profound risk” to children and repeated similar claims on *Dr. Phil Primetime*.¹⁶¹ During a hearing before the House Energy & Commerce Committee, Secretary Kennedy justified his decision to roll back CDC recommendations related to COVID-19 vaccination for children by stating “there was no science supporting that recommendation.”¹⁶²

During the Finance Committee hearing, in an exchange with Senator Hassan, Secretary Kennedy doubled down on these false claims. However, both randomized controlled trials and extensive real-world evidence support the use of COVID-19 vaccines in children, as described below.

Excerpt on p. 59:

Secretary Kennedy: “The industry makes the studies, and they could not provide a study that said that [the COVID-19 vaccine] is effective for healthy kids.”

¹⁵⁹ Dan-Yu Lin, Yangjianchen Xu, Yu Gu, et al., Effectiveness of Bivalent Boosters against Severe Omicron Infection, *The New England Journal of Medicine*, (Jan. 25, 2023;388:764-766, Vol. 388, No. 8, Updated Apr. 6, 2023) doi:10.1056/NEJMc2215471.

¹⁶⁰ Catalina Jaramillo, *RFK Jr. Misleads About Safety of COVID-19 Vaccine in Children*, FactCheck.org, (May 7, 2025) <https://www.factcheck.org/2025/05/rfk-jr-misleads-about-safety-of-covid-19-vaccine-in-children/>.

¹⁶¹ *Id.*

¹⁶² PBS NewsHour, *WATCH: Lawmaker says Kennedy made ‘ill-informed decision’ in reversing COVID vaccine guidance*, (June 24, 2025) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mfXxFvvaY0o&t=77s>.

Both Pfizer and Moderna performed clinical trials with children in the study population to establish safety and effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccine for children of different age groups. These studies were submitted to the FDA and used in the FDA decision to provide authorization for children.¹⁶³

Initially, a process called “immunobridging” was used to ensure children had timely access to COVID-19 vaccination. Immunobridging is a longstanding scientific method that evaluates whether updated versions of vaccines elicit similar immune responses to the original version, which previously received FDA approval or authorization. This process is commonly used for vaccines that need to be updated for new virus strains seasonally, and has been used for decades with respect to influenza vaccines. If full-scale versions of clinical trials were required to be replicated for seasonal vaccine updates, it would jeopardize the ability of manufacturers to develop annual vaccines that protect against variant strains in time as viruses keep mutating. In other words, the immunobridging process is essential to ensuring seasonal updates of critical vaccines for influenza and COVID-19 are available on time for patients.¹⁶⁴

Immunobridging studies can also be used during pandemics and disease outbreaks where an effective vaccine already exists to assess whether vaccines produce appropriate immune responses in populations that did not participate in the original trials. This was a critical strategy for protecting Americans by ensuring timely access to immunization during the COVID-19 pandemic,¹⁶⁵ as well as during other past outbreaks involving Ebola,¹⁶⁶ applications for respiratory syncytial virus (RSV),¹⁶⁷ and more. Immunobridging was initially used to ensure access to COVID-19 vaccination for children and pregnant women¹⁶⁸ during the height of the

¹⁶³ Pfizer, *FDA Advisory Committee Votes in Favor of Granting Emergency Use Authorization for the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine in Children 5 to <12 Years*, (Oct. 26, 2021) <https://www.pfizer.com/news/press-release/press-release-detail/fda-advisory-committee-votes-favor-granting-emergency-use>; <https://trials.modernatx.com/study/?id=mRNA-1273-P204>.

¹⁶⁴ Pedro Cruz, Jie Min Lam, Jehad Abdalla, et al., *Immunobridging Trials: An Important Tool to Protect Vulnerable and Immunocompromised Patients Against Evolving Pathogens*, *Vaccines* (Basel), (Dec. 2024) 29;13(1):19 doi: 10.3390/vaccines13010019.

¹⁶⁵ Helen Chu, Holly Janes, Marco Carone, et al., *Improving the evidence base for COVID-19 vaccines*, *Nature Medicine* (Sep. 4, 2025) doi:10.1038/s41591-025-03908-z; Doran Fink, *Immunobridging to Evaluate Vaccines*, *U.S. Food and Drug Administration*, WHO meeting on COVID-19 Vaccines Research, (Dec. 6, 2021) https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/blue-print/doran-fink_4_immunobridging_vrconsultation_6.12.2021.pdf.

¹⁶⁶ Viki Bockstal, Maarten Leyssen, Dirk Heerwegh, et al., *Non-human primate to human immunobridging demonstrates a protective effect of Ad26.ZEBOV, MVA-BN-Filo vaccine against Ebola*, *npj Vaccines*, (Nov. 2022), 30;7(1):156 doi: 10.1038/s41541-022-00564-z. PMID: 36450746.

¹⁶⁷ Archana Jastorff, Efi Gymnopoulou, Jose Salas, et al., *Safety and immunogenicity of the Ad26/protein preF RSV vaccine in adults aged 18 to 59 years with and without at-risk comorbidities for severe respiratory syncytial virus disease: A phase 3, randomized, controlled, immunobridging trial*, *Vaccine*, (Jan. 1, 2025), 43(Pt 1):126514 doi: 10.1016/j.vaccine.2024.126514.

¹⁶⁸ Pregnant women were excluded from the original COVID-19 vaccine clinical trials. This is standard practice for clinical trials, including for vaccines, because there are higher safety standards for testing medical interventions on vulnerable populations. Similar to other vaccines, COVID-19 vaccine manufacturers used developmental and reproductive toxicity (DART) studies on animals, which showed no harm to fetal development. Extensive real-world evidence now exists demonstrating that COVID-19 vaccination is safe and effective for pregnant women, and ACOG recommends COVID-19 vaccination for pregnant women. See Kelly Kons, Megan Wood, Lindsey Peck, et al., *Exclusion of Reproductive-aged Women in COVID-19 Vaccination and Clinical Trials*, *Womens Health Issues*,

COVID-19 pandemic. As noted above, both randomized controlled trials and extensive real-world evidence have since confirmed the safety, efficacy, and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines in children.¹⁶⁹

III. Claims Misrepresenting Vaccine Accessibility under his Leadership

Secretary Kennedy has repeatedly claimed, throughout the Finance Committee hearing and in other forums, that he will not take steps as Secretary that would reduce access to vaccines for people who want them. During his confirmation process, Kennedy repeatedly told the Finance Committee that he would “do nothing as HHS Secretary that makes it difficult or discourages people from taking vaccines.”¹⁷⁰ This statement is already untrue with respect to COVID-19 vaccines, and it is possible that Secretary Kennedy’s newly reconstituted ACIP panel will vote to narrow vaccine recommendations for – and therefore access to – Hepatitis B and MMRV vaccines in a matter of days.

On May 27, 2025, Secretary Kennedy removed CDC COVID-19 vaccine recommendations for healthy children and pregnant women. These actions, and the alleged lack of input from CDC scientists into this process, are described in detail beginning on p. 20 of this document.

On August 27, 2025, the FDA, under Secretary Kennedy’s leadership, approved COVID-19 vaccines with labels that narrowed the population for which the vaccines are indicated. In general, the COVID-19 vaccines are now only indicated for people aged 65 and older as well as for people with risk factors for developing severe COVID-19.¹⁷¹ *The New York Times* reported that these changes were made by Dr. Vinay Prasad over the objection of FDA staff scientists, who favored more widespread access to COVID-19 vaccines, particularly due to high hospitalization rates among young children.¹⁷² Dr. Prasad was appointed to be the head of the Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research (CBER), which oversees the FDA’s work on vaccines, after Kennedy ousted Dr. Peter Marks, who had been the head of CBER for nearly a decade. According to *Politico*, early in Secretary Kennedy’s tenure when Dr. Prasad was forced out of his role by the White House, Secretary Kennedy lobbied aggressively for his

(Nov-Dec, 2022), 32(6):557-563 doi:10.1016/j.whi.2022.06.004; Natalia Schilder, B. Tiesjema, Peter Theunissen, et al., *Evaluation of non-clinical toxicity studies of COVID-19 vaccines*, Regul Toxicol Pharmacol, (Aug. 2023);142:105438 doi: 10.1016/j.yrtph.2023.105438; The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, *COVID-19 Vaccination Considerations for Obstetric–Gynecologic Care*, (Dec. 2020, Last Updated Sep. 2025) <https://www.acog.org/clinical/clinical-guidance/practice-advisory/articles/2020/12/covid-19-vaccination-considerations-for-obstetric-gynecologic-care>.

¹⁶⁹ Atsuyuki Watanabe, Ryoma Kani, Masao Iwagami, et al., *Assessment of Efficacy and Safety of mRNA COVID-19 Vaccines in Children Aged 5 to 11 Years: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis*, JAMA Pediatrics, (Apr. 2023), 1;177(4):384-394. doi: 10.1001/jamapediatrics.2022.6243.

¹⁷⁰ Committee on Finance, *Hearing to consider the nomination of Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., of California, to be Secretary of Health and Human Services*, U.S. Senate, (Jan. 29, 2025) <https://www.finance.senate.gov/hearings/hearingto-consider-the-nomination-of-robert-f-kennedy-jr-of-california-to-be-secretary-of-health-and-human-services>.

¹⁷¹ Matthew Perrone, *FDA approves updated COVID-19 shots with limits for some kids and adults*, AP, (Aug. 27, 2025) <https://apnews.com/article/vaccines-covid-shots-fda-kennedy-pfizer-children-9ce19908ae7afb354732aa162fd28532>.

¹⁷² Christina Jewett, *F.D.A. Official Overruled Scientists on Wide Access to Covid Shots*, The New York Times, (Sept. 3, 2025) <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/03/health/fda-covid-vaccines-rfk-jr.html>.

reinstatement.¹⁷³ Dr. Prasad has previously described providing annual COVID-19 vaccines to children as “malpractice.”¹⁷⁴

Doctors and researchers are also voicing concerns that the new FDA labels do not align with evidence about the risk-benefit profile of the COVID-19 vaccines. For example, the Infectious Disease Society of America said the decision to narrow FDA labels “ignores science and puts millions of lives at risk.”¹⁷⁵ AAP referred to the label changes as “deeply troubling,”¹⁷⁶ and continues to recommend COVID-19 vaccination for all children between age 6 months and 23 months due to increased risks associated with contracting COVID-19 among babies.¹⁷⁷ ACOG also continues to recommend COVID-19 vaccination for pregnant women.¹⁷⁸

Secretary Kennedy’s changes to COVID-19 vaccine FDA labels and CDC recommendations have caused considerable patient access challenges, as well as confusion and burden for patients, doctors, pharmacies, and various state regulators. For example, because Secretary Kennedy changed CDC recommendations without going through the ACIP process for the 2024-2025 vaccine season, and ACIP has not yet voted on recommendations for the upcoming season, it is unclear what ACIP actually recommends with respect to COVID-19 vaccines right now.

Pharmacies are the most common site where patients get vaccinated against COVID-19.¹⁷⁹ State laws about which vaccines pharmacies can administer are often tied to ACIP recommendations, which has resulted in an unclear regulatory environment.¹⁸⁰ Many pharmacies are therefore now

¹⁷³ Adam Cancryn and David Lim, *New FDA commissioner agreed to oust top vaccine regulator after private swearing-in*, Politico, (Mar. 31, 2025) <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/03/31/new-fda-commissioner-signed-off-on-ousting-top-vaccine-regulator-after-private-swearing-in-00260582>; David Lim, Dasha Burns, and Tim Röhn, *Wiles intervened to save RFK Jr.’s top vaccine aide*, Politico, (Aug. 14, 2025) <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/08/14/rfk-trump-prasad-wiles-sarepta-loomer-maha-00508819>.

¹⁷⁴ Melody Schreiber, *Critic of Covid boosters set to enact tough agenda as top US vaccines official*, The Guardian, (May 14, 2025) <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/may/14/vinay-prasad-vaccines-covid>.

¹⁷⁵ Tina Tan, *FDA’s narrow COVID-19 vaccine label ignores science and puts millions of lives at risk*, The Infectious Diseases Society of America, (Aug. 27, 2025) <https://www.idsociety.org/news--publications-new/articles/2025/fdas-narrow-covid-19-vaccine-label-ignores-science-and-puts-millions-of-lives-at-risk/>.

¹⁷⁶ Lizzy Lawrence and Matthew Herper, *FDA issues narrower approvals for Covid boosters, revokes emergency authorizations*, STAT, (Aug. 27, 2025) <https://www.statnews.com/2025/08/27/fda-covid-vaccines-kennedy-rescinds-emergency-use-authorization>.

¹⁷⁷ The American Academy of Pediatrics – Committee on Infectious Diseases, *Recommendations for COVID-19 Vaccines in Infants, Children, and Adolescents: Policy Statement*, Pediatrics (Aug. 19, 2025) <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2025-073924>.

¹⁷⁸ The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, *ACOG Releases Updated Maternal Immunization Guidance for COVID-19, Influenza, and RSV*, (Aug. 22, 2025) <https://www.acog.org/news/news-releases/2025/08/acog-releases-updated-maternal-immunization-guidance-covid-in-fluenza-rsv>.

¹⁷⁹ Peng-jun Lu, Anup Srivastav, Mei-Chuan Hung, et al., *National and state-specific estimates of settings where adults received influenza, updated COVID-19, and RSV vaccinations, 2023-2024 respiratory virus season, United States*, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, (June 10, 2024) <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/imz-managers/coverage/national-state-vaccination-estimates.html>.

¹⁸⁰ Pien Huang, *Concerned about federal vaccine policies, states are crafting their own*, NPR, (Sept. 6, 2025) <https://www.npr.org/sections/shots-health-news/2025/09/06/nx-s1-5532121/states-vaccine-guidance-washington-oregon-new-mexico>; Grace Abels and Maria Ramirez, *Robert F. Kennedy Jr. said ‘everybody can get’ the COVID-19 vaccine. Is that true?*, PolitiFact, (Sept. 4, 2025)

taking the unprecedented step of requiring prescriptions to access COVID-19 vaccines, which creates barriers for patients and adds administrative burden for doctors.¹⁸¹

In light of the FDA label changes, physicians also must grapple with whether they are willing to prescribe COVID-19 vaccines “off-label,” which will exacerbate confusion and could ultimately have implications with respect to reimbursement and liability protections. Health insurers may also adjust their coverage policies in response to the FDA label and CDC recommendation changes, as federal laws requiring coverage and zero dollar cost-sharing also tie to ACIP recommendations. Thus, Secretary Kennedy’s actions could also cause patients to face higher copays or have to pay entirely out-of-pocket for COVID-19 vaccines as insurers determine how and whether to adjust their coverage policies.¹⁸²

During the Finance Committee hearing, however, Secretary Kennedy doubled down on his claim that anyone can access the COVID-19 vaccines. For example, when Senator Cassidy presented Secretary Kennedy with actual stories of access challenges from doctors and patients, Secretary Kennedy told the Senator he was “wrong.” He also told Senators Hassan and Warren that “everybody can get the vaccine” and “anybody can get the booster.”

Excerpt on p. 41:

Senator Cassidy: "Let me finish up. You also told us[,] Senator Wyden[,] at the outset that you didn't want to take vaccines away from people. And as I conclude, I would like to say this, because of the conflicting recommendations made about COVID, this is from Eric Erickson,¹⁸³ good conservative out of Atlanta, Georgia, occasionally gives me hell.

'My wife has stage four lung cancer. She is one of the people that COVID vaccine actually helps. Thanks to the current mess at HHS, CVS is unable to get her vaccine. Secondly, an email from a physician friend of mine: 'Hey, Bill, I'm not even sure what I'm asking you, but we're all confused and concerned about who can get the COVID vaccine. We are having our attorney try and render an opinion, but there's no firm guidance and concern about liability if vaccines are given to a patient who request it, but not on the current CDC list. Pharmacists are requiring a

<https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2025/sep/04/robert-f-kennedy-jr/robert-f-kennedy-jr-said-everybody-can-get-the-cov/>; Tom Murphy, *For some, a COVID-19 vaccine means jumping through hoops or hitting the road*, AP via NBC5, (Sept. 5, 2025)

<https://www.nbcdfw.com/news/national-international/covid-19-vaccines-availability-states-travel/3914747/>.

¹⁸¹ Berkeley Lovelace, Jr., *Delayed vaccine meeting, shifting policies make it difficult for people to get Covid shot at pharmacies*, NBC News, (Aug. 29, 2025)

<https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/delayed-vaccine-meeting-shifting-policies-make-difficult-people-get-co-rcna228055>.

¹⁸² Jennifer Kates, *ACIP, CDC, and Insurance Coverage of Vaccines in the United States*, KFF, (June 13, 2025) <https://www.kff.org/other-health/acip-cdc-and-insurance-coverage-of-vaccines-in-the-united-states/>.

¹⁸³ Erick Erickson (@EWErickson), X, (Aug. 28, 2025, 9:33 PM) <https://x.com/EWErickson/status/1961240726110671312>.

prescription now even for patients over 65, creating a huge headache.' I submit these for the record.

Senator Cassidy: I would say effectively we're denying people vaccine[s]. I --"

[...]

Secretary Kennedy: "You're wrong."

Excerpt on p. 61:

Senator Hassan: "To Senator Warner's point, to the parents who are concerned all around the country, to people who want to get the COVID vaccine this fall even if they're under 65, because the boosters have worked, there's been much less serious disease, people do not have the same level of threat and risk from COVID that they used to because of these vaccines, people who want to exercise their freedom of choice are being denied that."

Secretary Kennedy: "No, they aren't."

Senator Hassan: "Because - because you --"

Secretary Kennedy: "Everybody can get the vaccine."

Excerpt on p. 84:

Senator Warren: "Will you tell America that all adults and all children over six months of age are eligible to get a COVID booster at their local pharmacy today?"

Secretary Kennedy: "Anybody can get the booster."

Secretary Kennedy's assertions about COVID-19 vaccine accessibility directly contradict with real life stories from people all over the country who are having difficulty accessing COVID-19 vaccines in the aftermath of his decisions. The timing could not be worse, as COVID-19 cases are climbing nationwide. Examples of reported access barriers include:

- Two of the largest pharmacy chains in the country, CVS and Walgreens, have restricted COVID-19 vaccine access in many states due to regulatory confusion and uncertainty. In some states, access to COVID-19 vaccines at these pharmacies was completely cut off. In other states, these pharmacies are requiring prescriptions from doctors, which is a significant change in medical practice.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁴ Maggie Astor and Dani Blum, *C.D.C. Uncertainty Upends Covid Vaccine Access at CVS and Walgreens*, The New York Times, (Aug. 28, 2025) <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/08/28/well/cvs-pharmacy-covid-vaccine-16-states.html>.

- Over 3,200 people submitted stories to *The Washington Post* about their experiences trying to access the COVID-19 vaccine, highlighting many people being turned away from pharmacies and crossing state lines to get vaccinated. For example, a man with a heart valve replacement was initially denied vaccination, and was only able to get a vaccine at his pharmacy after insisting his doctor write him a prescription. An immunocompromised child also encountered barriers because the child's doctor had to include specific diagnostic codes in order to help the child access the vaccine.¹⁸⁵
- The *Los Angeles Times* compiled stories from people in California scrambling to try to get vaccinated, some of whom contracted COVID-19 before they were able to get a shot. Doctors are also reporting calls from worried parents, especially those who have children or other people living in their home at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19.¹⁸⁶
- Over 200 people have shared stories with *Your Local Epidemiologist* about struggling to access the COVID-19 vaccine.¹⁸⁷ Many of these accounts come from high-risk individuals, including health care workers and pregnant women. For example, a woman 33 weeks pregnant in Oklahoma reported that her provider could not obtain any vaccines, leaving her unable to make an informed choice.
- Seniors in Oregon are reporting canceled pharmacy appointments for COVID-19 vaccination and trouble getting physicians to write prescriptions for the vaccine.¹⁸⁸
- Nevada's Public Employees Benefits Program, which serves more than 71,000 people, was not able to make COVID-19 vaccines available during a vaccination clinic.¹⁸⁹

Many states have taken unprecedented steps to try to mitigate the consequences of Secretary Kennedy's actions, otherwise patient access challenges would be even worse. For example on September 5, 2025, New York Governor Kathy Hochul declared a Statewide Disaster Emergency to bypass the mandate that prescriptions be required for receiving a COVID-19 vaccine, allowing pharmacists to provide vaccines without prescription for 30 days.¹⁹⁰ Pennsylvania's Governor, Josh Shapiro, called on the Pennsylvania State Board of Pharmacy to hold a vote in which the Board voted to allow pharmacists to rely on the vaccine recommendations of alternative sources

¹⁸⁵ David Ovalle and Paige Winfield Cunningham, *RFK Jr. says anyone who wants a covid shot can get one. Not these Americans*, *The Washington Post*, (Sept. 7, 2025)

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2025/09/07/covid-vaccine-access-challenges/>.

¹⁸⁶ Rong-Gong Lin II, *People can't get COVID vaccines as cases surge. Anger is building against Trump*, *Los Angeles Times*, (Sept. 5, 2025)

<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-09-05/covid-vaccines-are-harder-to-get-under-trump-and-people-are-angry-about-it>.

¹⁸⁷ Katelyn Jetelina, *Executive Summary: Challenges to Covid-19 Vaccine Access Across the U.S.*, *Your Local Epidemiologist*; on file with the Committee.

¹⁸⁸ Jake Holter, *Oregonians report canceled appointments amid 'confusing' COVID-19 vaccine policy*, *KGW8*, (Sept. 10, 2025)

<https://www.kgw.com/article/news/local/covid-19-shots-oregonians-report-canceled-appointments-fda-vaccine-policy/283-19e49f19-1e34-4098-afdf-6a3bba22ee82?tbref=hp>.

¹⁸⁹ April Corbin Girnus, *Nevada has a COVID vaccine access problem; legislative leader calls for state action*, *Nevada Current*, (Sept. 5, 2025)

<https://nevadacurrent.com/2025/09/05/nevada-has-a-covid-vaccine-access-problem-legislative-leader-calls-for-state-action/>.

¹⁹⁰ Kathy Hochul, *Exec. Order No. 52 Declaring a Disaster in the State of New York Due to Federal Actions Related to Vaccine Access*, *The New York State*, (Sept. 5, 2025)

<https://www.governor.ny.gov/executive-order/no-52-declaring-disaster-state-new-york-due-federal-actions-related-vaccine-access>.

other than ACIP and to provide COVID-19 vaccines without a prescription.¹⁹¹ In Massachusetts, the Department of Public Health updated its vaccine administration policy to permit the Department's Commissioner to determine which vaccines are allowed to be provided by pharmacists, instead of relying on ACIP recommendations for the determination.¹⁹² Because each state has its own laws on when pharmacies can administer vaccines, however, some states have faced more potential legal and regulatory barriers when trying to mitigate the negative patient access impacts of Secretary Kennedy's actions.¹⁹³

Secretary Kennedy's statements about vaccine access are already untrue with respect to COVID-19 vaccines. Access to other vaccines – such as Hepatitis B and the MMRV vaccine – could also be restricted, depending on the outcome of the next ACIP meeting beginning on September 18, 2025. The agenda for another ACIP meeting in October 2025 has not yet been announced.¹⁹⁴ At the first meeting of the newly reconstituted ACIP panel in June 2025, members announced that they may go further in examining the childhood immunization schedule, which includes additional vaccines, such as for whooping cough.¹⁹⁵

Excerpt on p. 33-34:

Senator Bennet: "Let me just say, Mr. Secretary, all these vaccines that we're talking about today are free and accessible to parents today in America, who have the freedom to be able to make that choice for their children. Will that be true after your hand-picked panel makes their judgments about these vaccines?"

Secretary Kennedy: "I think that parents should be free to --"

Senator Bennet: "I know, you said that before I do too."

¹⁹¹ Josh Shapiro, *State Board of Pharmacy Votes to Protect Vaccine Access Across PA*, The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, (Sept. 3, 2025) <https://www.pa.gov/governor/newsroom/2025-press-releases/state-board-of-pharmacy-votes-to-protect-vaccine-access-across-pa>.

¹⁹² Maura Healey, *Governor Healey Announces Immediate Steps to Ensure Vaccine Availability in Massachusetts Amid Trump, RFK Rollbacks*, The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, (Sept. 4, 2025) <https://www.mass.gov/news/governor-healey-announces-immediate-steps-to-ensure-vaccine-availability-in-massachusetts-amid-trump-rfk-rollbacks>.

¹⁹³ Shaanth Nanguneri, *Kotek pushes back on criticism over Oregon's COVID-19 vaccine access*, Oregon Capital Chronicle via Central Oregon Daily News, (Sept. 12, 2025) https://www.centraloregondaily.com/news/regional/kotek-oregon-covid-vaccine-access-2025/article_c74c6368-d2c5-4770-a229-a2f6825c30b4.html.

¹⁹⁴ U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) ACIP Meeting Information*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, (June 18, 2025) <https://www.cdc.gov/acip/meetings/index.html>.

¹⁹⁵ Lena H. Sun, Lauren Weber, and Rachel Roubein, *RFK Jr.'s vaccine panel to review childhood immunization schedule*, The Washington Post, (June 25, 2025) <https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2025/06/25/rfk-jr-vaccine-panel-acip-meeting/>; Isobel Whitcomb, *The Vaccine Schedule Is Under Fire. What's the Evidence for It?*, The New York Times, (Jan. 25, 2025, Updated Jan. 28, 2025) <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/25/well/childhood-vaccine-schedule.html>.

Secretary Kennedy: "To make their own choices."

Senator Bennet: "So will they be just as free after these --"

Secretary Kennedy: "I assume they will be."

In an exchange with Senator Bennet, Secretary Kennedy said he assumes other vaccines will remain free and accessible. None of the Secretary's statements or actions suggest this prediction is a reliable one.

IV. Other Misrepresentations about Vaccine Safety by Secretary Kennedy

Secretary Kennedy consistently claims he is not "anti-vaccine," but he has repeatedly called vaccine safety into question in public forums, including by making many statements that are demonstrably false or misleading. For example, during a 2021 podcast interview, Secretary Kennedy stated: "I see somebody on a hiking trail carrying a little baby and I say to him, 'Better not get him vaccinated.' And he heard that from me. If he hears it from 10 other people, maybe he won't do it, you know, maybe he will save that child."¹⁹⁶

Perhaps most famously, in July 2023, Secretary Kennedy told podcaster Lex Fridman "there's no vaccine that is safe and effective."¹⁹⁷ Secretary Kennedy has since claimed, on multiple occasions, that he never said this, despite being confronted with the audio. He has also criticized the individuals who take his words at face-value.¹⁹⁸ During the September Finance Committee hearing, Senator Smith asked Secretary Kennedy how he can reconcile his claims that he's not anti-vaccine with his past statement that no vaccine is safe and effective. Secretary Kennedy appeared to reaffirm his statement that there are no safe and effective vaccines when he replied that "both things are true."

Excerpt on p. 100-101:

Senator Smith: "When were you lying, sir? When you told this committee that you were not anti-vax, or when you told Americans that there is no safe and effective vaccine?"

Secretary Kennedy: "Both things are true."

During the Finance Committee hearing, Secretary Kennedy continued to make statements casting doubt on vaccine safety and misrepresenting the extent to which vaccines have been studied for safety, particularly with respect to childhood immunizations.

¹⁹⁶ Daniel Dale, *Fact check: RFK Jr. claimed he's never told people to avoid vaccination. He did – less than two years ago*, CNN, (July 21, 2023) <https://www.cnn.com/2023/07/21/politics/fact-check-rfk-not-anti-vax/index.html>.

¹⁹⁷ Lex Clips, *Is RFK Jr an antivaxer? – Robert F Kennedy Jr and Lex Fridman*, Lex Fridman Podcast, (July 6, 2023) https://youtu.be/iWTCcZwuIZ8?si=gnDfL-7Y_dl-gTlt&t=28.

¹⁹⁸ Jessica McDonald, *RFK Jr. Incorrectly Denies Past Remarks on Vaccine Safety and Effectiveness*, FactCheck.org, (Nov. 8, 2023, Clarified Nov. 13, 2023, Updated Aug. 23, 2024) <https://www.factcheck.org/2023/11/scicheck-rfk-jr-incorrectly-denies-past-remarks-on-vaccine-safety-and-effectiveness/>.

For example, Secretary Kennedy has repeatedly exaggerated the number of vaccines children receive before the age of 18, implying that the growth in the number of vaccinations children receive warrants revisiting the childhood vaccine schedule. In a June 12, 2025 interview with *Fox News*, Secretary Kennedy fixated on the growth in the childhood vaccine schedule, claiming it has increased from “11 vaccines in 1986 [to t]oday, [where] children get between 69 and 92 vaccines before they’re 18.”¹⁹⁹ He echoed these same statements on June 24, 2025 before the House Energy & Commerce Health Subcommittee, stating: “When I was a kid, I got three vaccines. Today they get 69 to 92 jabs of 19 vaccines between conception and when they are 18 years old.”²⁰⁰

The implication, as illustrated by language in Secretary Kennedy’s *MAHA Report*, is that growth in vaccine doses for children could potentially cause harm. Specifically, the *MAHA Report* notes there has been “growth of the childhood vaccine schedule,” but “limited scientific inquiry into the links between vaccines and chronic disease, the impacts of vaccine injury, and conflicts of interest in the development of the vaccine schedule.”²⁰¹ At the Finance Committee hearing, Secretary Kennedy once again repeated his claim to Senator Barrasso that children “have to get between 69 and 92 vaccines.” He also suggested vaccines are not tested against placebos.

Excerpt on p. 64–65:

Secretary Kennedy: “For most -- right now -- you know, when I was a kid, I got three vaccines. I was fully compliant. Today's children have to get between 69 and 92 vaccines in order to be fully compliant between maternity and 18 years. Only one of those 19 vaccines -- 92 doses, only one of those vaccines have ever been tested against an inert placebo.”

The CDC Childhood and Adolescent Immunization Schedule is a list of routine childhood vaccinations developed by ACIP that is often used to inform school vaccination requirements. For children born in the United States between 1994 and 2023, routine childhood vaccinations will have prevented over one million deaths, 32 million hospitalizations, and 508 million illnesses, resulting in direct savings of \$540 billion.²⁰²

Secretary Kennedy’s statement that children receive between 69 and 92 vaccine doses is highly misleading. Under the immunization schedule, children receive approximately 31 vaccine doses

¹⁹⁹ Daily Kos, *HHS Sec. Robert F. Kennedy Jr. goes on Fox News and to spread misinformation about vaccines*, (June 13, 2025) https://youtu.be/d4_v7wKD0xw?si=oNNySd5Y7eFv854k&t=7.

²⁰⁰ Committee on Energy & Commerce – Health Subcommittee, *Health Subcommittee Hearing: The Fiscal Year 2026 Department of Health and Human Services Budget*, U.S. House of Representatives, (June 24, 2025) <https://energycommerce.house.gov/events/health-subcommittee-hearing-the-fiscal-year-2026-department-of-health-and-human-services-budget> at 3:28:07.

²⁰¹ Make America Healthy Again Commission, *Make Our Children Healthy Again: Assessment*, The White House, (May 22, 2025) <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/MAHA-Report-The-White-House.pdf>.

²⁰² Fangjun Zhou, Tara Jatlaoui, Andrew Leidner, et al., *Health and Economic Benefits of Routine Childhood Immunizations in the Era of the Vaccines for Children Program — United States, 1994–2023*, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, (Aug. 8, 2024) <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/73/wr/mm7331a2.htm>.

by age 18, protecting against 17 diseases.²⁰³ This total does not count annual influenza and COVID-19 vaccines, which could bring the total number of vaccine doses into the 60s. Even though children receive more vaccine doses to provide protection against more diseases, modern vaccines expose children to *95 percent fewer* antigens (which are protein pieces from a pathogen) than vaccines available in the 1980s. In other words, thanks to advancements in modern vaccine technology, the risk of “overloading” the immune system is lower today than it was decades ago, despite children receiving more vaccine doses.²⁰⁴

During his exchange with Senator Barrasso, Secretary Kennedy also asserted that only one childhood vaccine has been tested against an “inert placebo.” Many childhood vaccines have undergone placebo-based randomized-controlled trials, including the polio,²⁰⁵ rotavirus,²⁰⁶ HPV,²⁰⁷ pneumococcal,²⁰⁸ Hepatitis B,²⁰⁹ and COVID-19 vaccines.²¹⁰ Inert placebos have no active ingredients and do not cause immune responses. Saline is an example of an inert placebo. By using buffers or preservatives to match the properties of a vaccine without generating an immune response, non-saline placebos can be designed to be functionally or biologically inert. Sometimes it is necessary to use a functionally inert placebo, rather than saline, to ensure that a trial remains “blinded,” meaning that trial participants do not find out they are in the control group. When a study is no longer “blinded,” this introduces bias that often renders the study data unusable.²¹¹

²⁰³ U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Child and Adolescent Immunization Schedule by Age* (Addendum updated August 7, 2025), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, (July 2, 2025) <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/immunization-schedules/child-adolescent-age.html>; Dr. Jade Cobern, *RFK Jr. said US children receive up to 92 vaccine doses. How many shots do kids really get?*, ABC News, (Sept. 10, 2025) <https://abcnews.go.com/Health/rfk-jr-us-children-receive-92-vaccine-doses/story?id=125401242>.

²⁰⁴ Katelyn Jetelina, Megan Ranney, Jason Schwartz, et al., *Childhood Vaccinations: Understanding the Impact and Importance of Childhood Vaccinations*, Yale School of Public Health, (Nov. 2024) <https://ysph.yale.edu/research/information-sheets/childhood-vaccinations/>; Jake Scott, ‘Too many, too soon’? Debunking a common fear about kids’ vaccines, STAT, (June 24, 2025) <https://www.statnews.com/2025/06/24/too-many-too-soon-vaccine-schedule-children-antigens-immune-system-aluminum/>.

²⁰⁵ Paul Meier, *The Biggest Public Health Experiment Ever: The 1954 Field Trial of the Salk Poliomyelitis Vaccine*, Statistics: A Guide to the Unknown – Chapter 2 edited by J.M. Tanur, (1972) http://www.medicine.mcgill.ca/epidemiology/hanley/c622/salk_trial.pdf.

²⁰⁶ Global Advisory Committee on Vaccine Safety, *Statement on risks and benefits of rotavirus vaccines Rotarix and RotaTeq*, World Health Organization, (Sept. 22, 2010) <https://www.who.int/groups/global-advisory-committee-on-vaccine-safety/topics/rotavirus-vaccines/related-links>.

²⁰⁷ Peter Doshi, Florence Bourgeois, Kyungwan Hong, et al., *Adjuvant-containing control arms in pivotal quadrivalent human papillomavirus vaccine trials: restoration of previously unpublished methodology*, BMJ Evidence-Based Medicine, (Dec. 2020; 25(6)213-219) doi: 10.1136/bmjebm-2019-111331.

²⁰⁸ Raul Isturiz and Chris Webber, *Prevention of adult pneumococcal pneumonia with the 13-valent pneumococcal conjugate vaccine: CAPiTA, the community-acquired pneumonia immunization trial in adults*, Human Vaccines & Immunotherapeutics, (2015;11(7):1825-1827) doi: 10.1080/21645515.2015.1043502.

²⁰⁹ Wolf Szmuness, Cladd Stevens, Edward Harley, et al., *Hepatitis B vaccine: demonstration of efficacy in a controlled clinical trial in a high-risk population in the United States*, The New England Journal of Medicine (Oct. 9, 1980; 303(15)833-841) doi:10.1056/NEJM198010093031501.

²¹⁰ Lindsey Baden, Hana El Sahly, Brandon Essink, et al., *Efficacy and Safety of the mRNA-1273 SARS-CoV-2 Vaccine*, The New England Journal of Medicine, (Feb. 4, 2021; Vol. 384(5)403-416) doi: 10.1056/NEJMoa2035389.

²¹¹ Kate Yandell, *HHS Advances Kennedy’s Old ‘Placebo’ Vaccine Safety Claims*, FactCheck.org, (May 6, 2025) <https://www.factcheck.org/2025/05/hhs-advances-kennedys-old-placebo-vaccine-safety-claims/>; Jessica McDonald, *FactChecking Robert F. Kennedy Jr.*, FactCheck.org, (Aug. 9, 2023, Updated Aug. 23, 2024, Corrected Dec. 26, 2024) <https://www.factcheck.org/2023/08/scicheck-factchecking-robert-f-kennedy-jr/>.

However, once a vaccine is proven effective, using inert placebos in future trials would require withholding an effective vaccine from the control group, which could cause avoidable harm. As a result, widely accepted scientific ethics guidelines – such as the Declaration of Helsinki²¹² and the World Health Organization Ethics Guidelines²¹³ – require using existing treatments rather than inert placebos for clinical study control groups. As a result, once an original vaccine has been found safe and effective in a clinical trial against a placebo, updated or new versions of vaccines are often tested against existing approved vaccines, rather than placebos.

The Washington Post has reported that Secretary Kennedy intends to require all new vaccines to be tested against inert placebos prior to FDA licensure. This has caused alarm among scientists because doing so could compromise timely access to seasonally updated vaccines, like flu vaccines, and could require unethically denying protection from existing vaccines to control group participants.²¹⁴

In exchange with Senator Marshall, Secretary Kennedy also claimed vaccines are the only medical intervention “exempt from pre-licensing safety studies,” pointing to the Hepatitis B vaccine as an example of inadequate safety testing. Contrary to the Secretary’s claim, vaccines are not exempt from pre-licensing safety studies. In fact, the FDA’s risk tolerance for vaccines is lower than for many other medical products precisely because vaccines are administered to healthy individuals, including children. In addition, vaccines are also subject to extremely robust post-approval surveillance that monitors for safety signals.²¹⁵

Excerpt on p. 107:

Secretary Kennedy: “And we don't understand the risk profile because vaccines are the only medical intervention, medical device or -- or pharmaceutical drug that are exempt from pre-licensing safety studies. And so, there are two hepatitis vaccines, and one of them was -- had a safety study that lasted for four days on 143 kids for a product that's going to be given to the 76 million kids.”

Senator Marshall: “Yeah.”

²¹² World Medical Association General Assembly, *WMA Declaration of Helsinki – Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Participants*, World Medical Association, (Adopted by the 18th General Assembly in June 1964; amended Oct. 2024) <https://www.wma.net/policies-post/wma-declaration-of-helsinki/>.

²¹³ World Health Organization, *Ensuring ethical standards and procedures for research with human beings*, (2025) <https://www.who.int/activities/ensuring-ethical-standards-and-procedures-for-research-with-human-beings>; World Health Organization, *Expert Consultation on the Use of Placebos in Vaccine Trials*, (2013) https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/94056/9789241506250_eng.pdf.

²¹⁴ Lauren Weber, Rachel Roubein, Lena H. Sun and Carolyn Y. Johnson, *RFK Jr. will order placebo testing for new vaccines, alarming health experts*, *The Washington Post*, (May 1, 2025) <https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2025/04/30/rfk-jr-vaccine-testing/>.

²¹⁵ Duke Vaccine and Trials Units, *Vaccine Testing in People*, Duke University School of Medicine – Duke Human Vaccine Institute, (2025) <https://dhvi.duke.edu/programs-and-centers/duke-vaccine-and-trials-unit/clinical-trials-resources/vaccine-testing-people>.

Secretary Kennedy: "The risk profile -- prior to the introduction of the vaccine, the risk of a baby dying from hepatitis B was 1 in 7 million. That means you need to give seven million hepatitis B vaccines to prevent one death."

Hepatitis B is a viral infection that causes liver damage and is the leading cause of liver cancer.²¹⁶ The initial Hepatitis B vaccines were licensed in the United States in the 1980s, and more than one billion doses of the Hepatitis B vaccine have since been administered.²¹⁷ Because the primary source of Hepatitis B infection is transmission from mother to child at birth, CDC recommends Hepatitis B vaccination at birth.²¹⁸ Since these recommendations took effect, childhood Hepatitis B infections have decreased by 95 percent.²¹⁹

Secretary Kennedy's claim about Hepatitis B vaccine safety studies is a misrepresentation. Hepatitis B vaccines have undergone clinical trials that enrolled children, including prior to FDA licensing. The FDA evaluated the scientific evidence and weighed the risks and benefits for all the populations for which the Hepatitis B vaccines are indicated, including for infants and children, and found that the vaccines demonstrated safety and efficacy in these populations.²²⁰ According to the *Hepatitis B Foundation*, the vaccine is "one of the safest and most effective vaccines ever made. Numerous studies looking at the vaccine's safety have been conducted by the World Health Organization, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and many different medical societies."²²¹ Hepatitis B vaccines have also been subject to robust post-licensure safety surveillance for decades, which has not detected serious safety issues.²²²

Secretary Kennedy also continues to push a narrative that vaccines cause autism. As discussed in detail on p. 29 of this document, the link between vaccines and autism has been studied extensively. The overwhelming scientific consensus is that vaccines do not cause autism.

Nevertheless, in response to questioning by Senator Johnson, Secretary Kennedy referenced the repeatedly discredited link between vaccines and autism, including a widely circulated story

²¹⁶ U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Fast Facts: Global Hepatitis B Vaccination*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, (July 30, 2024)

<https://www.cdc.gov/global-hepatitis-b-vaccination/data-research/index.html>.

²¹⁷ Chari A. Cohen, *The hepatitis B vaccine's value and necessity*, Hepatitis B Foundation, (Feb. 4, 2025)

<https://www.hepb.org/news-and-events/news-2/the-hepatitis-b-vaccines-value-and-necessity/>.

²¹⁸ Immunize.org, *Immunizations for Babies – A Guide for Parents*, (Mar. 12, 2025)

https://www.immunize.org/wp-content/uploads/catg_d/p4010.pdf.

²¹⁹ Chari A. Cohen, *The hepatitis B vaccine's value and necessity*, Hepatitis B Foundation, (Feb. 4, 2025)

<https://www.hepb.org/news-and-events/news-2/the-hepatitis-b-vaccines-value-and-necessity/>.

²²⁰ *Highlights Of Prescribing Information for RECOMBIVAX HB*, U.S. Food and Drug Administration, (Initial U.S. Approval 1986)

<https://www.fda.gov/files/vaccines%2C%20blood%20&%20biologics/published/package-insert-recombivax-hb.pdf>; *Highlights Of Prescribing Information for ENGERIX-B*, U.S. Food and Drug Administration, (Initial U.S. Approval 1989) <https://www.fda.gov/media/119403/download> (Download).

²²¹ U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Prevention of Hepatitis B Virus Infection in the United States: Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices – Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, (Jan. 12, 2018)

<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/67/rr/rr6701a1.htm>. Hepatitis B Foundation, *Vaccine for Hepatitis B*, (Accessed Sept. 13, 2025) <https://www.hepb.org/prevention-and-diagnosis/vaccination/>.

²²² U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Hepatitis B Vaccine Safety*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, (Dec. 20, 2024) <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccine-safety/vaccines/hepatitis-b.html>.

among vaccine skeptics that data is being withheld showing that Black boys who receive the MMR vaccine have a higher risk of developing autism.

Excerpt on p. 71:

Secretary Kennedy: "But in 2002, the CDC did an internal study of Atlanta -- in Fulton County, Georgia children and looked at children who got the MMR vaccine on time and compared those to kids who got them later. So, in other words, kids who got them before 36 months and kids who got them afterward.

The data from that study showed that black boys who got the vaccine on time had a 260 percent greater chance of getting an autism diagnosis than children who waited. The chief scientist on that, Dr. William Thompson, the senior set -- vaccine safety scientist at CDC, was ordered to come into a room with four other coauthors by his boss, Frank DeStefano, who's the head of the immunization safety branch, and ordered to destroy that data, and then [CDC] published it without that fact."

This claim dates back to a 2004 CDC study that assessed whether vaccine timing varied between children with and without autism. The study found no correlation between the age at which a child received the MMR vaccine and an autism diagnosis in children across the entire population studied (624 autistic children and 1,824 children without autism) as well as stratified specific racial subgroups.²²³ Dr. William Thompson, the sole individual who Secretary Kennedy named when he was asked during the September Finance Committee hearing to provide CDC scientists who had briefed him on vaccine issues, is one of the study's co-authors.

This CDC study was later reanalyzed and distorted in a 2014 study by Dr. Brian Hooker, a biomedical engineer who is now the Chief Scientific Officer at Children's Health Defense.²²⁴ In 2013, Dr. Thompson became connected to Dr. Hooker and, in August 2014, Dr. Hooker released recordings of phone conversations between him and Dr. Thompson, in which Dr. Thompson claimed to have evidence that the 2004 CDC study excluded data allegedly suggesting a relationship between vaccines and autism among Black boys.²²⁵ The recordings were later released with narration by Andrew Wakefield and, according to *CNN*, Dr. Hooker said he began his research after being contacted by Dr. Thompson.²²⁶ Mr. Wakefield is a prominent and widely discredited vaccine skeptic

²²³ Frank DeStefano, Tanya Karapurkar Bhasin, William Thompson, et al., *Age at First Measles-Mumps-Rubella Vaccination in Children With Autism and School-Matched Control Subjects: A Population-Based Study in Metropolitan Atlanta*, *Pediatrics* (Feb. 1, 2004; 113 (2):259-266) doi.org/10.1542/peds.113.2.259.

²²⁴ About Us, *Our Team*, Children's Health Defense, (2025) <https://childrenshealthdefense.org/about-us/#our-team>.

²²⁵ According to public reporting, Dr. Thompson said he wasn't aware he was being recorded by Dr. Hooker. Alice Park, *Whistleblower Claims CDC Covered Up Data Showing Vaccine-Autism Link*, *TIME*, (Aug. 28, 2014) <https://time.com/3208886/whistleblower-claims-cdc-covered-up-data-showing-vaccine-autism-link/>.

²²⁶ Debra Goldschmidt, *Journal questions validity of autism and vaccine study*, *CNN*, (Aug. 28, 2014) <https://edition.cnn.com/2014/08/27/health/irpt-cdc-autism-vaccine-study>.

who published a now-retracted 1998 study linking the MMR vaccine to autism.²²⁷ Due to the “serious and wide-ranging findings against”²²⁸ Mr. Wakefield, the General Medical Council in the United Kingdom removed him from the Medical Register.²²⁹

In September 2014, Dr. Frank DeStefano, the CDC Director of Immunization Safety and the lead author of the 2004 study, contested Dr. Thompson’s claims. Dr. DeStefano stated that he and his colleagues stand by their findings and all study authors, including Thompson, agreed on analysis and interpretation prior to it being submitted for publication.²³⁰ At issue was the CDC researchers’ decision to exclude study participants who did not have a birth certificate available in Georgia from secondary analysis. Initially, the scientists analyzed the entire population. For the secondary analysis, however, the researchers limited the population to those with a Georgia birth certificate in order to adjust for additional potential confounding factors, like birth weight and gestational age. As a result, individuals without Georgia birth certificates were excluded from part of the study.²³¹

Dr. Hooker reanalyzed the CDC’s 2004 study data and published his own results.²³² His analysis – which has been discredited and retracted by the journal that published it – alleged that Black boys had a higher risk of autism when vaccinated before 36-months. In its retraction, the editors noted that they “no longer have confidence in the soundness of the findings” due to the wide array of methodological errors, including cherry picking data points that supported his conclusion. The paper also cited “undeclared competing interests on the part of the author which compromised the peer review process” as a concern.²³³

Dr. Hooker and Mr. Wakefield both appear to profit off of their vaccine skeptic crusade. For example, in 2023, Dr. Hooker wrote a book comparing vaccinated and unvaccinated

²²⁷ The study was retracted in 2010 following revelations of fraudulent data, serious methodological concerns, undisclosed financial conflicts of interest by the lead author, and other ethical violations. *See How a Now-Retracted Autism Study Went Viral -- Again*, ABC News, (Oct. 9, 2014)

<https://abcnews.go.com/Health/now-retracted-autism-study-viral/story?id=25248179>.

²²⁸ John F. Burns, *British Medical Council Bars Doctor Who Linked Vaccine With Autism*, The New York Times, (May 24, 2010) <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/25/health/policy/25autism.html>; Zosia Kmietowicz, *Wakefield is struck off for the “serious and wide-ranging findings against him*, BMJ, (May 24, 2010) 340 :c2803 doi:10.1136/bmj.c2803.

²²⁹ Susan Dominus, *The Crash and Burn of an Autism Guru*, The New York Times Magazine (Apr. 20, 2011) <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/24/magazine/mag-24Autism-t.html>; Sarah Boseley, *Andrew Wakefield struck off register by General Medical Council*, The Guardian (May 24, 2010) <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2010/may/24/andrew-wakefield-struck-off-gmc>.

²³⁰ *Id.*

²³¹ U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *CDC Statement: 2004 MMR and Autism Study*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, (Last Reviewed Aug. 24, 2020) https://archive.cdc.gov/www_cdc_gov/vaccinesafety/concerns/autism/cdc2004pediatrics.html.

²³² Retraction Note from the Editor and Publisher, *Retraction: Measles-mumps-rubella vaccination timing and autism among young African American boys: a reanalysis of CDC data*, Translational Neurodegeneration, (Oct. 3, 2014) <https://doi.org/10.1186/2047-9158-3-22>; *How a Now-Retracted Autism Study Went Viral -- Again*, ABC News, (Oct. 9, 2014) <https://abcnews.go.com/Health/now-retracted-autism-study-viral/story?id=25248179>.

²³³ *Id.*

populations with Secretary Kennedy.²³⁴ The recordings of Dr. Thompson formed part of the basis of Mr. Wakefield's 2016 film *Vaxxed: From Cover-Up to Catastrophe*.²³⁵ Additionally, Dr. Hooker is also compensated for his part-time (20 hours per week) leadership role at Children's Health Defense; in 2023, he received \$142,208.²³⁶

²³⁴ Sarah Oweremohle, *RFK Jr.'s long, complicated history with the measles vaccines*, CNN, (Apr. 12, 2025) <https://www.cnn.com/2025/04/12/politics/rfk-jrs-long-complicated-history-with-the-measles-vaccines>; Sheera Frenkel, *Where Robert F. Kennedy Jr. Delivers His Fringe Views: Not on the Trail*, The New York Times, (Sept. 12, 2023) <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/09/12/technology/rfk-jr-campaign-vaccines.html>.

²³⁵ Rebecca Robbins, *We watched the movie 'Vaxxed' so you don't have to*, STAT, (Apr. 1, 2016) <https://www.statnews.com/2016/04/01/vaxxed-autism-movie-review/>.

²³⁶ Children's Health Defense 2023 IRS 990, *Full text of "Full Filing" for fiscal year ending Dec. 2023*, ProPublica – Nonprofit Explorer, (Updated Aug. 21, 2025) <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/260388604/202402749349301310/full>.

Conclusion

Secretary Kennedy has a long history as a vaccine skeptic. He has written almost two dozen books, including numerous that prop-up vaccine skeptic positions, like *Vax-Unvax* and *Vaccine Villains: What the American Public Should Know about the Industry*. Secretary Kennedy was identified as the “top superspreader” of COVID-19 vaccine misinformation on a specific social media platform.²³⁷ His willingness to repeatedly use his platform to spread misleading and widely refuted information has translated to discrete harms, including the deaths of children from preventable illnesses. As Secretary, Kennedy has already taken steps that have restricted access to vaccines, undermined the government’s ability to be prepared to protect against disease outbreaks, distorted vaccine science, reduced public confidence in vaccination, and more. Even as the American public’s concerns and frustration with this situation grow, there is no evidence that Secretary Kennedy plans to change course.

Secretary Kennedy’s unwillingness to respond to the concerns of bipartisan members of Congress was on full display during the September Finance Committee hearing. It is clear that he is moving his agenda on vaccines forward within HHS, and allowing fringe and widely discredited views, rather than “gold standard science,” to influence– and even dictate – federal vaccine policy and decisions. His actions have not been carried out with the “radical transparency” that Secretary Kennedy promised. On the contrary, it is not clear who the Secretary is consulting about vaccine-related matters. He appears to be pushing out or sidelining career scientists in HHS who try to present him with evidence that challenges his views, and is instead empowering his hand-picked, political staff within HHS to work around these scientists. When policy decisions are made, such as changing COVID-19 vaccine CDC recommendations and FDA labels, the process and evidence allegedly supporting these decisions has been anything but transparent.

This situation demands immediate action from Congress. More Americans are going to lose access to vaccines and suffer preventable illnesses, or even death, if the Secretary continues down his current path. The Secretary’s actions especially risk the lives of babies and children, vulnerable seniors, pregnant women, and people with disabilities. Specifically, Congress must get to the bottom of the following issues that were raised and reinforced during his Finance Committee testimony:

- Congress must get additional details about the specific circumstances surrounding the firing of Dr. Monarez. Secretary Kennedy’s testimony contradicts Dr. Monarez’s assertion that he demanded she preapprove ACIP vaccine recommendations, regardless of the scientific evidence. This is a gravely serious allegation. Secretary Kennedy also admitted to demanding that Dr. Monarez fire CDC career scientists, potentially without cause. There is little information about who Secretary Kennedy asked her to fire and why.
- Allegations that Secretary Kennedy has sidelined and failed to consult career scientists across the CDC and other agencies also warrant further Congressional oversight. Public

²³⁷ Francesco Pierri, Matthew DeVerna, Kai-Cheng Yang, et al., *One Year of COVID-19 Vaccine Misinformation on Twitter: Longitudinal Study*, Journal of Medical Internet Research (Feb. 24, 2023 Vol. 25:e42227) <https://www.jmir.org/2023/1/e42227>.

reporting and on-the-record statements strongly suggest that the Secretary is making significant federal vaccine policy decisions without appropriate scientific input – and, in some cases, scientists’ concerns may have been willfully ignored.

- Secretary Kennedy has installed multiple, prominent vaccine skeptics to drive and engage in government research and studies that will presumably be used to inform future vaccine-related policies and decisions at HHS. Career scientists are sounding the alarm that these studies lack scientific integrity, casting serious doubt that the American public can trust the findings of any vaccine-related research that comes out of HHS. Congress and the American public need more transparency over the specific study methodologies and whether these studies have gone through appropriate review processes to vet their scientific rigor prior to being released to the public.
- Further, Congress should scrutinize whether the Secretary’s vaccine safety initiatives are an appropriate use of taxpayer resources. Many of the inquiries the Secretary has sanctioned involve areas of study for which there is a well-established evidence base, such as the Secretary’s insistence on using HHS funds to explore a link between vaccines and autism that has been disproven time and time again.

It was never a question of *whether* Secretary Kennedy would use his office to undermine vaccine confidence and access, but *how far* he would go. Unfortunately – but unsurprisingly – the worst case is manifesting. Vaccine policy decisions have a direct bearing on the health and safety of the American people, especially vulnerable children, seniors, pregnant women, and people with disabilities. In just a few days, when Secretary Kennedy’s hand-picked ACIP panel meets, it could vote to restrict access to vaccines that prevent Hepatitis B, measles, mumps, rubella, chickenpox, and COVID-19. This could cost people their lives.

Secretary Kennedy’s actions pose an urgent threat to vaccine access. There must be immediate intervention to prevent this situation from worsening. The health and safety of the public, especially America’s children, demand it.