

I am writing as a pediatrician and concerned citizen to express my deep alarm at recent moves by Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. He is dismantling the scientific and public health infrastructure that has safeguarded our nation against vaccine-preventable diseases. The actions to dissolve the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), shifts authority over drugs and vaccines from the CDC to the FDA, and undermines the scientific consensus on immunization, threatening to reverse decades of progress in public health and put American lives at risk.

## **1. Dissolution of the ACIP and Undermining Scientific Oversight**

- Secretary Kennedy recently fired all 17 members of the ACIP, the expert panel that has for decades provided science-based guidance on vaccine use in the United States. The ACIP's recommendations are foundational: they determine which vaccines are covered by insurance, guide clinicians, and are relied upon by parents, schools, and public health officials.
- This unprecedented move has been condemned by leading medical organizations, including the American Medical Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics, who warn that it "undermines trust" and "upends a transparent process that has saved countless lives"[29](#).
- The ACIP is composed of independent experts, most of whom are practicing physicians and academic specialists, with rigorous conflict-of-interest disclosures[113](#). Claims of pervasive corruption are not supported by evidence; rather, the committee's integrity and transparency have been repeatedly affirmed by federal reviews[113](#).

## **2. Threats to Vaccine Policy and Future Public Health**

- Secretary Kennedy's stated intention is to "reconstitute" the ACIP with members more aligned with his views, which are well-documented as skeptical of established vaccine science[3,8,13](#). This raises the risk that evidence-based recommendations will be replaced by ideology, leading to reduced vaccine uptake and increased vulnerability to outbreaks.
- The timing is especially dangerous: the United States is currently experiencing a measles outbreak and declining childhood vaccination rates, trends that will only worsen if expert guidance is replaced by suspicion and misinformation[2,9,13](#).

## **3. Dismantling Legal Protections for Vaccine Manufacturers**

- There are credible concerns that these actions are paving the way for Mr. Kennedy's long-standing goal: to remove the liability protections established by the National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act of 1986 (NCVIA)[4,5,14,15](#). This law was enacted after a wave of lawsuits in the 1970s and 1980s nearly drove vaccine manufacturers out of business, threatening the nation's vaccine supply[14](#).
- The NCVIA created the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program (VICP), which provides a no-fault alternative to the tort system for vaccine injuries, ensuring compensation for the rare cases of harm while protecting the vaccine supply[4,5,11,14](#). If

these protections are stripped, manufacturers could face a flood of litigation, threatening the availability of vaccines and opening the door for massive legal settlements that benefit trial lawyers at the expense of public health<sup>5,15</sup>.

- Mr. Kennedy has a history of litigating against vaccine manufacturers and has publicly advocated for the removal of liability shields, which would directly benefit his post-government career and those of his legal allies<sup>5,15</sup>.

#### **4. Consequences for Children and Public Health**

- The result of these policies will be predictable and tragic: children and adults will die from diseases that are currently preventable by vaccines<sup>2,9,13</sup>. Once vaccination rates drop and outbreaks occur, it will take years, if not a decade, to rebuild public trust and restore the protection that vaccines provide to our communities.
- The transparent, science-driven process for vaccine development and approval in the United States is among the most rigorous in the world, involving years of laboratory, animal, and multi-phase human trials, followed by ongoing safety monitoring<sup>12</sup>. Disrupting this process in favor of ideology or personal gain is reckless and dangerous.

#### **5. Scientific Consensus: Germ Theory, Not Miasma**

- The miasma theory of disease, which attributed illness to “bad air,” was abandoned over a century ago. Modern medicine is built on the germ theory, which has been repeatedly validated and is the foundation for all effective interventions against infectious diseases<sup>6,7,12</sup>.
- While science is always evolving, the overwhelming empirical evidence supports the safety and efficacy of vaccines. The current system, with its reliance on expert panels and rigorous regulatory review, is the best defense we have against preventable disease.

#### **In Conclusion**

I urge you to take immediate action to:

- Restore the independence and scientific integrity of the ACIP and CDC vaccine policy.
- Protect the legal framework that ensures both vaccine safety and availability, including the liability protections essential for a stable vaccine supply.
- Reject any efforts to politicize or undermine the scientific consensus on immunization, which remains one of the greatest achievements in public health.

Our children, families, and communities depend on your leadership to defend science, protect public health, and ensure that policy is driven by evidence, not ideology or personal interest.

Sincerely, Joe Leanza, MD

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*This letter is informed by current news coverage, statements from leading medical organizations, and the established scientific literature on vaccine safety, efficacy, and public health policy.*

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