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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510–6250

November 17, 2026

VIA EMAIL

The Honorable Robert F. Kennedy Jr.
Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Kennedy:

I write regarding yet another troubling instance of the Department of Health and Human Services censoring critical public health information, this time related to the risks pregnant women face from the country's current measles outbreak. According to public reporting, Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) scientists sought to warn doctors of rising measles rates and provide treatment guidance through the agency's designated system for communicating urgent information with American clinicians, the Health Alert Network (HAN), but senior agency officials blocked the warning.[1] Such actions are simply inexcusable when the United States is in the midst of its worst measles outbreak in more than three decades, one that has already claimed ten American lives this year.[2]

The Trump Administration's repeated unwillingness to confront the dangers of infectious disease, and its hostility to vaccines, are squarely to blame for the Pan American Health Organization's recent decision to revoke the United States's measles elimination status.[3] For a quarter-century, the United States regularly registered only small numbers of measles cases each year. That accomplishment, rooted in the phenomenal success of the MMR vaccine, took decades of sustained bipartisan effort to achieve, but less than two years of your tenure to squander. Indeed, the sudden return of measles is the very reason that the HAN notification the scientists proposed is so critical. Even experienced doctors may have gone their whole careers without having treated a single measles patient—precisely because of the success of past

[1] Lena Sun, *CDC scientists sought urgent alert on measles in pregnancy. It wasn't approved.*, WASH. POST (Oct. 30, 2026), https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2026/10/30/cdc-has-report-measles-pregnancy-its-unclear-when-it-will-publish/.

[2] Sara Boden, *2 more people die of measles complications top 5,400,* CIDRAP (Nov. 13, 2026), https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/wisconsin-measles-death-us-third-week-rcna607701.

[3] Liz Essley Whyte and Jennifer Calfas, *U.S. Loses Measles-Elimination Status as Historic Resurgence Sickens Thousands,* WALL STREET J. (Nov. 13, 2026), https://www.wsj.com/health/u-s-loses-measles-elimination-status-as-historic-resurgence-sickens-thousands-b95e8780.

vaccination campaigns. Physicians may struggle to recognize, let alone treat, this highly infectious and potentially fatal disease.[4]

After CDC scientists failed to obtain approval for the HAN, they sought to get the information out through the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR), the agency's in-house medical journal.[5] But multiple other vaccine-related papers have been languishing in the MMWR's approval process and the measles article appears to have been similarly hamstrung by political considerations, causing the agency scientists to seek to publish it elsewhere. On Monday, a version of the article appeared online in the New England Journal of Medicine, reporting a number of disturbing outcomes for pregnant women and their newborn children and stressing the importance of preparing healthcare systems, "particularly in communities with a high proportion of unvaccinated people."[6] Among the 112 pregnant women with measles in the study, almost all of whom appear to have been unvaccinated, the rate of premature birth was four times higher than the background rate for the United States—information that your department somehow failed to recognize as urgent or significant.[7]

This attempt to suppress agency research supporting vaccination echoes other decisions your department has made regarding measles. In March of 2025—after measles had begun spreading in Texas, but before it ultimately killed two children in the state—HHS political officials held back a risk assessment from CDC's Center for Forecasting and Outbreak Analytics, which warned of heightened risk of transmission in areas with low vaccination rates.[8] After news of the forecast leaked, HHS officials dismissed it as "not say[ing] anything the public does not already know," even though it relied on new data about the outbreak.[9]

Since becoming Secretary, you have consistently sought to undermine vaccination, airing bluster and distortion on social media while attempting to keep HHS employees from adding to the ample record of vaccine safety and effectiveness. For example, last October, senior officials at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) ordered agency scientists to withdraw studies and abstracts that demonstrated the safety of the COVID-19 and shingles vaccines.[10] And earlier this year, Dr. Jay Bhattacharya, then the acting CDC director, reportedly halted the publication of a different study in the MMWR, this one demonstrating the effectiveness of the COVID-19

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[4] Lena Sun, *Surging measles cases are forcing doctors to treat conditions they've never seen,* WASH. POST (Nov. 14, 2026), https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2026/11/14/doctors-are-learning-fly-measles-surge-presents-rare-cases/.

[5] Sun, *supra* note 1.

[6] Elizabeth Lewis et al, *Outcomes among Pregnant Women with Measles and Their Infants in the United States—Preliminary Analysis, 2025-2026*

[7] Lena Sun, *CDC declined to alert risk of measles in pregnancy. A journal released the data*, Wash. Post (Nov. 16, 2026), https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2026/11/16/cdc-declined-alert-risk-measles-pregnancy-journal-released-data/.

[8] Patricia Callahan, *The CDC Buried a Measles Forecast That Stressed the Need for Vaccinations,* PROPUBLICA (Mar. 28, 2025), https://www.propublica.org/article/measles-vaccine-rfk-cdc-report.

[9] *Id*.

[10] Christina Jewett, F.D.A. Blocked Publication of Research Finding Covid and Shingles Vaccines Were Safe, N.Y. TIMES (May 5, 2026), https://www.nytimes.com/2026/05/05/us/politics/fda-covid-vaccine-studies.html; Lizzy Lawrence, How two top FDA officials are quietly upending vaccine regulations, Stat (Nov. 12, 2025), https://www.statnews.com/2025/11/12/fda-vaccine-policy-controlled-by-vinay-prasad-tracy-beth-hoeg/.

vaccines in preventing hospitalization, even though it had already cleared the agency's scientific review process.[11] In both of these cases, HHS defended its acts of scientific censorship by resorting to the same unsupportable critiques that it used to justify suppressing the measles forecast last year, and that is it is now using to hold back critical information about the risks pregnant women face from measles.[12]

The declining rates of vaccination against measles that you encouraged as an anti-vaccine activist and now oversee as the nation's top health official are harming pregnant women, and also creating an unprecedented risk of congenital measles in children. Prior to the development of the MMR vaccine, measles was widespread. Approximately 95 percent of women were believed to have had it by the time they reached childbearing age, and were therefore unlikely to contract measles while pregnant.[13] But because of the effectiveness of the MMR immunization campaign, the unvaccinated American women who are of childbearing age today are overwhelmingly likely to have never had measles by the time they become pregnant, and are highly susceptible to contracting the disease.[14] For doctors battling the current outbreak in Pennsylvania, where more than 1,500 people have been infected, congenital measles has gone from unheard of to common.[15] At least one of the six measles deaths that Pennsylvania has reported this year—a death you quickly took to social media to suggest "may even have been altogether fabricated"—was a newborn baby born to a mother fighting an active case of the measles.[16]

If you do not permit career scientists at HHS agencies to aid clinicians and inform researchers, tragedies like these are unlikely to be the last of the preventable deaths attributable Trump Administration health policies. In order to help the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations better understand your department's response to the ongoing measles outbreak, including its potential suppression of scientific communications, please provide the following information and records[17] by December 2, 2026:

1. All versions of HAN notifications that have been circulated by agency scientists for submission or approval since January 20, 2025 but which have not been published;

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[11] Lena Sun, *CDC delays publishing report showing covid vaccine benefits*, WASH. POST (Apr. 9, 2026), https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2026/04/09/covid-vaccine-report-delayed/

[12] *See* Sun, *supra* note 1 (indicating that the agency's review process would "inform[] publication decisions and timing" of the MMWR article).

[13] Cecilia Nowell, *Doctors Say a Rare Kind of Measles Is on the Rise,* THE ATLANTIC (Oct. 30, 2026), https://www.theatlantic.com/health/2026/10/congenital-measles-birth-pennsylvania/689214/.

[14] *Id.*.

[15] *Id*.

[16] Tom Bartlett, *The Measles-Stricken Mother Who Lost Her Newborn Son,* THE ATLANTIC (Aug. 30, 2026), https://www.theatlantic.com/health/2026/08/pennsylvania-measles-infant-death-family/688469/.

[17] "Records" include written, recorded, or graphic material of any kind, including letters, memoranda, reports, notes, electronic data (emails, email attachments, Signal, WhatsApp, or other encrypted messages, and any other electronically-created or stored information), calendar entries, inter-office communications, meeting minutes, phone/voice mail or recordings/records of verbal communications, and drafts (whether or not they resulted in final documents).

2. All internal and external communications referring or related to the HAN notifications described in request 1;

3. All documents reflecting policies currently in force related to HAN notifications, including requirements for review or clearance by political appointees;

4. A list of all MMWR submissions that, since January 20, 2025, have cleared CDC's scientific review process but have yet to be published and are not designated for publication within the next two weeks, including:
    a. The names of the study's authors;
    b. The date the study cleared pre-publication review;
    c. A description of the study's subject matter;
    d. The names of the official or officials who ordered the study held back;

5. All internal and external communications referring or related to the MMWR submissions described in request 4;

6. All documents reflecting policies currently in force related to publication in MMWR, including requirements for review or clearance of studies by political appointees.

7. All documents reflecting policies currently in force related to communication of scientific findings with the public, including the authority of political appointees to edit or modify work product of agency scientists.

I also request today that you make available for interviews the following CDC officials no later than January 22, 2027:

1. Althea Grant-Lenzy, Director, Office of Science, and CDC Chief Science Officer
2. Dr. Rebecca Greco Koné, Acting Director, National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD)
3. Dr. David Sugerman, Acting Chief, Viral Vaccine Preventable Diseases Branch, Division of Viral Diseases, NCIRD
4. Dr. Leonard Jack, Acting Editor-in-Chief, MMWR

Please contact my staff as soon as possible about scheduling these interviews, or if you have questions about any of the above requests. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Richard Blumenthal
Ranking Member
Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations

cc: The Honorable Ron Johnson
Chairman