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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION,
LABOR, AND PENSIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6300

June 13, 2025

Dear Chairman Cassidy:

As you know, last week, in a dangerous and unprecedented decision that will have a profoundly negative impact on the lives of the American people, Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. fired all 17 members of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).¹

ACIP plays an essential role in ensuring Americans have access to affordable vaccines. It carefully reviews scientific data to make recommendations about who should get which vaccines and when. Once the CDC adopts those recommendations, insurance companies and government programs like Medicaid and Medicare are required to cover the vaccines. The recommendations also inform which vaccines are made available for free through the Vaccines for Children program.

Following Secretary Kennedy's decision, you said, "now the fear is that the ACIP will be filled up with people who know nothing about vaccines except suspicion."² This fear was well-founded. A few days after he gutted the Advisory Committee, Secretary Kennedy appointed eight new members to ACIP.³ The members include a former professor who made comparisons between the COVID vaccine and Nazi medical experiments, a Board member of a prominent anti-vaccine organization that works closely with the anti-vaccine organization Secretary Kennedy founded, and the Operating Partner of a private equity firm. Secretary Kennedy also replaced the CDC official responsible for overseeing the Advisory Committee, who had nearly 20 years of experience in vaccines at the CDC, and replaced her with the CDC director of scheduling and advance.⁴

Secretary Kennedy's reckless decision to fire these non-partisan scientific experts and replace them with ideologues with limited expertise and a history of undermining vaccines will not only endanger the lives of Americans of all ages, it directly contradicts a commitment he made to you before he was confirmed that he would not make any significant changes to this important Committee.

While Secretary Kennedy's actions are deeply disappointing they are not surprising. For decades, Secretary Kennedy has spread lies and dangerous conspiracy theories about safe and effective vaccines that have saved millions of lives. Unfortunately, since he has been confirmed I am very concerned that Secretary Kennedy is doubling down on his war on science and disinformation campaign that will lead to preventable illness and death.

¹ <https://www.hhs.gov/press-room/hhs-restore-public-trust-vaccines-acip.html>

² <https://x.com/SenBillCassidy/status/1932193937349075077>

³ <https://x.com/seckennedy/status/1932899858920120692?s=46&t=O4jiIRBxcQIWS1gpe-pilA>

⁴ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2025/06/13/rfk-jr-vaccine-committee-overhaul/>

Therefore, I am requesting that we immediately initiate a bi-partisan investigation into these firings and conduct serious oversight into the actions Secretary Kennedy has taken to mislead the American people about the safety and effectiveness of vaccines and erode public health.

These are not just my views. Last week, the American Medical Association passed an emergency resolution urging our Committee to conduct a bi-partisan investigation into Secretary Kennedy's decision to fire this scientific panel.⁵ In passing the resolution, AMA members said they wanted to "take a stand, fight for what we believe in, and ask the government to do their job."⁶

I could not agree more.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I look forward to hearing back from you soon.

Sincerely,



Bernard Sanders
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

⁵ <https://www.ama-assn.org/system/files/a25-emergency-1001.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.medpagetoday.com/meetingcoverage/ama/116001>