

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
Hubert H. Humphrey Building
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

June 15, 2026

Dear Secretary Kennedy,

I am following up to a letter sent on July 11, 2025, that detailed strong concerns over the lack of Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) leadership in handling the rapid spread of measles across the United States. Nearly a year ago, I called on HHS to reverse the significant damage you had caused for the nation's infectious disease response infrastructure through mass layoffs of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) infectious disease staff, grant freezes and terminations, politicization of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), and promotion of your scientifically inaccurate anti-vaccine beliefs. Despite seeing the worst measles surge in over 30 years in 2025, you refused to reverse the damage caused by these destructive actions. As a result, states across the country continue to see new measles cases, recently including New York. I am once again calling on you to restore support, funding, and integrity to our infectious disease response infrastructure, through rehiring CDC experts, restoring vaccine hesitancy grants, and ensuring robust staffing and funding for programs that prevent measles outbreaks like the CDC's Wastewater Monitoring Program.

Under your leadership, 2025 saw the most measles cases across the U.S. since 1991, with 2,288 confirmed cases in 44 states. This year is already significantly outpacing last year's record-breaking outbreaks, with 2,063 cases already confirmed in 40 jurisdictions just six months into the year. For the first time in eight years, Erie County, New York which includes the city of Buffalo, has seen two cases of measles in recent weeks with an unknown source of infection. Measles can be prevented by vaccines, and communities like Buffalo should not fear the spread of a highly contagious illness because of the failures of federal leadership. This country is in desperate need of federal guidance and support led by HHS, or more unfortunate records will continue to be broken under your watch.

HHS policy has been driven by misguided anti-vaccine beliefs that continue to wreak havoc on the agency's ability to control and respond to infectious disease outbreaks. The cancellation of 40 grants focused on combatting vaccine hesitancy is emblematic of this chaos - these grants functioned to ensure Americans are well-informed of decisions to vaccinate themselves and their children—something you claim is of utmost importance. Under your tenure HHS also pursued the cancellation of \$11.4 billion in remaining pandemic response funds utilized by state and local

public health departments to surveil infectious diseases and work to prevent their spread. Beyond cancelling research funding and on-the-ground support for outbreak response, the decision to replace all 17 members of ACIP with anti-vaccine, anti-science ideologues and pursue a complete overhaul of the Committee is representative of the repeated actions this HHS has taken to prioritize the Secretary's anti-vaccine priorities over the health of this country.

The concerning measles response has been worsened by the decision to fire one-third of CDC's workforce, including leaders in measles response, disease detectives at the Epidemic Intelligence Service, and public health experts that readily deploy to local public health departments across the country. The short and long-term impacts of these decisions cannot be overstated. Under your leadership, HHS has lost decades of scientific knowledge and experience, contributing to the reversal of the country's success in eliminating vaccine preventable illnesses such as measles.

Reversing the damage that has already been done is not enough. While each action has chipped away at the foundation of public health that has taken decades to build, there is an urgent need to reinforce the programs that are still intact. The Administration must prioritize surveillance by extending contracts for the Wastewater Monitoring Program to ensure that communities are able to detect potential outbreaks to prepare for response. A current contract that is crucial to maintaining a robust level of testing sites across the country is set to expire this summer, and it is imperative you coordinate with CDC to renew the contract. It is clear from the record-breaking numbers so far this year that new measles cases could continue to rise. Every detection through surveillance is crucial to stopping outbreaks at their source. These programs are essential investments that HHS should partner with Congress on to curb the current spread of measles.

As New Yorkers and others across this country continue to worry about the spread of measles, there is an opportunity for HHS to adapt a science-backed public health response. Since I called attention to the shortcomings of our national measles response in July 2025, HHS has only doubled down on more firings, grant cancellations, ACIP changes, and pulling back on necessary public health investments. This country is at a crossroads for public health, and the decisions made today will affect communities in the coming days and for years beyond. I strongly encourage you to not only reverse course and address the harm you have caused to the nation's public health infrastructure, but prioritize strategic investments into programs that will help this country tackle the spread of measles.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator