

June 24, 2025

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

Dear Secretary Kennedy:

I write regarding what public experts have described as a “reckless” and “shortsighted” decision to fire all 17 independent members of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) and replace them with eight individuals that you appear to have hand-picked to further your anti-vaccine agenda. ACIP’s new members include vaccine skeptics, medical professionals with conflicts of interest, and individuals without any apparent experience conducting studies of vaccines, counseling patients about vaccines, or administering vaccines.

An expert panel of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), ACIP “develops recommendations on the use of vaccines in the civilian population of the United States.”¹ The decisions made by the panel have extraordinary public health consequences, influencing parents’ confidence in vaccines, physicians’ recommendations on who should receive them, and insurers’ coverage decisions.² According to the WHO, vaccines have saved 154 million lives globally since 1974, with 95% of those saved lives children younger than 5 years old.³

In announcing your decision to terminate the entire panel, you claimed – without evidence – that all 17 members had conflicts of interest that prevented them from effectively serving on the committee⁴ and asserted that “a clean sweep is needed to re-establish public confidence in vaccine science.”⁵ However, you have selected replacements who are known vaccine skeptics, appear to lack relevant training, or have financial relationships that present potential conflicts of interest,

¹ CDC, “Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP): General Committee-Related Information,” <https://www.cdc.gov/acip/about/index.html>.

² STAT, “Health secretary RFK Jr. abruptly fires CDC vaccine advisory panel,” Helen Branswell, Chelsea Cirruzzo, and Daniel Payne, June 9, 2025, <https://www.statnews.com/2025/06/09/rfk-jr-fires-every-member-of-cdc-vaccine-expert-panel-acip/>.

³ CAP, “Childhood Vaccination Has Saved Millions of Lives, but Rising Hesitancy Could Reverse Decades of Progress,” Steven Woolf and Jill Rosenthal, January 8, 2025, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/childhood-vaccination-has-saved-millions-of-lives-but-rising-hesitancy-could-reverse-decades-of-progress/>.

⁴ WSJ, “RFK Jr.: HHS Moves to Restore Public Trust in Vaccines,” Robert F. Kennedy Jr., June 9, 2025, <https://www.wsj.com/opinion/rfk-jr-hhs-moves-to-restore-public-trust-in-vaccines-45495112>.

⁵ *Id.*

calling into question your motives in purging the panel.⁶ While not every member of the panel raises immediately identifiable concerns, on the whole, the new choices have been described by one former ACIP member as “purveyors of disinformation.”⁷

For example, you appointed biochemist and early mRNA vaccine researcher Dr. Robert Malone, who is also a self-professed anti-vaxxer that has said, “Some people believe that the term anti-vaxxer is a pejorative. I do not – I view it as high praise.”⁸ Dr. Malone has made several misleading claims about the COVID-19 mRNA vaccine and even profited off of these claims. Dr. Malone reportedly stated on social media about the COVID-19 vaccine, “Simply put: As we prevent three deaths by vaccinating, we incur two deaths.”⁹ This was proven to be untrue, with the scientific paper with his claim retracted by the journal that initially published it.¹⁰ Even more stunningly, Dr. Malone has likened the public’s trust of federal COVID-19 vaccine guidelines to individuals in Nazi Germany.¹¹ During the height of the pandemic, Dr. Malone grew his following on his Substack newsletter on the back of his COVID-19 conspiracy theories, which at one point was raking in around \$31,200 in monthly revenue.¹² Additionally, Dr. Malone has served in 2018 served as a paid witness on behalf of anti-vaxxers, which, if he has any ongoing relationships or plans to again serve as a paid witness under similar circumstances, could raise questions about conflicts of interest: he has charged \$350 an hour as a hired witness in a lawsuit against Merck claiming, without proof, that the mumps vaccine is ineffective.¹³ As a member of ACIP, Dr. Malone will have an outsize influence on the nation’s vaccine recommendations, a significant concern given his history.

Similarly, you appointed the well-known critic of vaccine and COVID-19 lockdown mandates, Martin Kulldorff, to the panel. As the lead author of the Great Barrington Declaration, Kulldorff advocated for strategies like natural herd immunity to control the spread of COVID-19, which

⁶ STAT, “RFK Jr.’s new vaccine panel raises questions of how Kennedy defines conflicts of interest,” Chelsea Cirruzzo, June 13, 2025, <https://www.statnews.com/2025/06/13/rfk-jr-vaccine-panel-replacements-bring-new-conflicts-vaccine-skepticism-to-cdc-acip/>; STAT, “RFK Jr. names new members of CDC’s vaccine advisory panel,” Chelsea Cirruzzo, Isabella Cueto, Andrew Joseph, and Helen Branswell, June 11, 2025, <https://www.statnews.com/2025/06/11/rfk-jr-names-new-acip-members-replaces-cdc-vaccine-experts-he-just-fired/>.

⁷ The New York Times, “I Think He Is About to Destroy Vaccines in This Country,” David Wallace-Wells, June 18, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/06/18/opinion/kennedy-vaccine-panel.html>.

⁸ STAT, “RFK Jr.’s new vaccine panel raises questions of how Kennedy defines conflicts of interest,” Chelsea Cirruzzo, June 13, 2025, <https://www.statnews.com/2025/06/13/rfk-jr-vaccine-panel-replacements-bring-new-conflicts-vaccine-skepticism-to-cdc-acip/>; The New York Times, “I Think He Is About to Destroy Vaccines in This Country,” David Wallace-Wells, June 18, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/06/18/opinion/kennedy-vaccine-panel.html>.

⁹ AFP, “Flawed study misrepresents Covid-19 vaccination fatality rate,” AFP USA and Manon JACOB, July 13, 2021, <https://factcheck.afp.com/doc.afp.com.9EU9W7>.

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ The Washington Post, “A vaccine scientist’s discredited claims have bolstered a movement of misinformation,” Timothy Bella, January 24, 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2022/01/24/robert-malone-vaccine-misinformation-rogan-mandates/>.

¹² The New York Times, “I Think He Is About to Destroy Vaccines in This Country,” David Wallace-Wells, June 18, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/06/18/opinion/kennedy-vaccine-panel.html>.

¹³ CNN, “RFK Jr.’s new vaccine advisers include ER doctor who posted Islamophobic commentary online, expert witnesses against vaccines,” Meg Tirrell, Sarah Oweremohle, and Brenda Goodman, June 13, 2025, <https://www.cnn.com/2025/06/13/health/cdc-new-vaccine-advisers>.

were rejected by the WHO and the CDC.¹⁴ Kulldorff has also served as a paid expert witness for plaintiffs in a case against Merck over its Gardasil vaccine.¹⁵ Now as an ACIP member, Kulldorff's previous work and history making fringe and unproven claims raises questions about his ability to provide unbiased vaccine recommendations.

Several of your other appointees raise additional concerns:

- Vicky Pebsworth Debold is a nurse who serves on the board of the National Vaccine Information Center, a vaccine-skeptical nonprofit, which is described as a center that “advocates for vaccine exemptions and has argued that mRNA COVID-19 vaccines should not be recommended for everyone.”¹⁶
- Dr. James Pagano is an emergency medicine physician, who does not appear to have any training in infectious diseases or vaccinology, to the panel;¹⁷ and
- Dr. Michael Ross is someone you’ve described as “a clinical professor of obstetrics and gynecology at George Washington University and Virginia Commonwealth University,”¹⁸ despite both universities clarifying that Dr. Ross has not worked at either institution for years.¹⁹

During your confirmation hearing before the U.S. Senate, you pledged that you would “end...conflicts” of interest on ACIP²⁰ and “create an honest, unbiased, science-driven HHS.”²¹ You also avowed that “[you are] not against vaccines.”²² However, it remains unclear how the newly appointed panel members have been evaluated for conflicts of interest, or when this vetting

¹⁴ The New York Times, “Kennedy Announces Eight New Members of C.D.C Vaccine Advisory Panel,” Sheryl Gay Stolberg, June 11, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/06/11/us/politics/rfk-jr-cdc-vaccine-panel.html>; The Guardian, “WHO chief says herd immunity approach to pandemic ‘unethical’” Staff and agencies in Geneva, October 12, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/12/who-chief-says-herd-immunity-approach-to-pandemic-unethical>.

¹⁵ Reuters, “Exclusive: Kennedy’s new vaccine adviser was expert witness against Merck vaccine,” Chad Terhune and Dan Levine, June 12, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/kennedys-new-vaccine-adviser-was-expert-witness-against-merck-vaccine-2025-06-12/>; BioSpace, “Two of Kennedy’s New ACIP Picks Were Paid Expert Witnesses in Merck Vaccine Cases,” Tristan Manalac, June 13, 2025, <https://www.biospace.com/fda/two-of-kennedys-new-acip-picks-were-paid-expert-witnesses-in-merck-vaccine-cases>.

¹⁶ STAT, “RFK Jr.’s new vaccine panel raises questions of how Kennedy defines conflicts of interest,” Chelsea Cirruzzo, June 13, 2025, <https://www.statnews.com/2025/06/13/rfk-jr-vaccine-panel-replacements-bring-new-conflicts-vaccine-skepticism-to-cdc-acip/>; <https://www.cnn.com/2025/06/13/health/cdc-new-vaccine-advisers>.

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ Independent, “RFK Jr claims one of his new vaccine panel members works at GW University. The school says he doesn’t,” Joe Sommerlad, June 16, 2025, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/rfk-jr-vaccine-panel-member-professor-b2771000.html>.

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ U.S. Senate Committee on Finance, “Hearing to consider the nomination Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., of California, to be Secretary of Health and Human Services,” January 29, 2025, Transcript at 3:10:59, <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>.

²¹ U.S. Senate Committee on Finance, “Testimony of Robert F. Kennedy Jr. Nominee of President Trump to be Secretary of Health & Human Services,” January 29, 2025, <https://www.finance.senate.gov/download/01292025-kennedy-statement>.

²² U.S. Senate Committee on Finance, “Hearing to consider the nomination Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., of California, to be Secretary of Health and Human Services,” January 29, 2025, Transcript at 47:33, <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>.

process was initiated.²³ Additionally, given the short timeframe by which they were named to the committee, it would have been impossible for them to go through the rigorous process used by previous committee members.²⁴ Indeed, previous ACIP members were required to disclose major conflicts of interest and prohibited from holding stocks in major vaccine manufacturers or serving on their advisory boards,²⁵ and, once on the panel, ACIP members were required to recuse themselves from votes if they had a conflict.²⁶

While you've declared that previous efforts to guard against conflicts of interest on the panel were insufficient, you appear to have made no effort to ensure that your hand-picked appointees even declare their conflicts of interest, let alone meet a heightened standard.

As of June 24, 2025, just days before the new panel is set to meet for the first time, there are only disclosures for one of the eight newly appointed panel members available on the CDC website²⁷, and it is not clear how conflict of interest rules will be applied to the new panel. In addition, the agenda for this meeting will be truncated because your new appointees "are not yet in a position to deal with all the agenda items."²⁸ Nevertheless, the committee will discuss or take votes on recommendations for RSV, COVID-19, Influenza, and MMR vaccines. Alarming, it will also vote on the safety of thimerosal-containing vaccines – a dog whistle for vaccine skeptics – that has been placed on the agenda seemingly without any process to ensure members have access to the best available information to inform their discussion, as would be expected of any new discussion item.²⁹

These concerns are exacerbated by your own still-unresolved conflicts of interest. At your hearing, you made a commitment to not accept any compensation from drug companies following your tenure at HHS.³⁰ But you have not fully resolved your biggest conflict, a relationship with the law firm Wisner Baum.³¹ During your confirmation hearing, I questioned you on that arrangement: you had made millions in contingency fees from the firm in vaccine-related cases, and could

²³ Reuters, "Kennedy replaces fired US CDC panel members, includes anti-vaccine proponents," Ahmed Aboulenein, Julie Steenhuisen, and Michael Erman, June 12, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/us-health-chief-kennedy-names-new-members-vaccine-advisory-committee-2025-06-11/>.

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ The New York Times, "Kennedy Removes All C.D.C. Vaccine Panel Experts," Apoorva Mandavilli, June 9, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/06/09/health/rfk-jr-cdc-vaccine-panel.html>.

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ CDC, "Conflicts of Interest Disclosures of ACIP Members," <https://www.cdc.gov/acip/disclosures/by-member.html>.

²⁸ STAT, "CDC interim leaders, in first all-hands meeting, speak of 'myth-busting' and 'resilience'," Helen Branswell, June 17, 2025, <https://www.statnews.com/2025/06/17/cdc-staff-updated-on-acip-controversy-confirmation-timeline-for-new-director-susan-monarez/>.

²⁹ CDC, "Draft Agenda: Meeting of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP)," <https://www.cdc.gov/acip/downloads/agendas/draft-posted-2025-06-18.pdf>.

³⁰ U.S. Senate Committee on Finance, "Hearing to consider the nomination Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., of California, to be Secretary of Health and Human Services," January 29, 2025, Transcript at 2:09:46, <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>.

³¹ U.S. Senate Committee on Finance, "Hearing to consider the nomination Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., of California, to be Secretary of Health and Human Services," January 29, 2025, Transcript at 2:12:15, <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>.

continue to collect those fees even if confirmed.³² As a result, you were in position, as HHS Secretary, to financially benefit from strengthening anti-vaccine lawsuits – and, as I noted at the time, you could do so by naming anti-vaccine panel members to ACIP. These concerns are still unresolved: although you amended yourself as the primary beneficiary of these payments from Wisner Braun, you assigned the right to receive those payments to a close family member, your son Conor Kennedy and refused to rule out going back to your anti-vaccine work after your HHS tenure ends.³³ Your decision to reconstitute ACIP with members that share your anti-vaccine views therefore raises questions about your and your family’s ability to cash in from the dangerous decisions the panel appears prepared to make.

As presently constituted, the committee lacks the qualifications and credibility to offer the nation credible advice on vaccines. You have promised that, as HHS Secretary, you would root out conflicts of interest and promote “radical transparency,”³⁴ but you are failing miserably to meet this promise as you rush to impose your anti-vaccine agenda on the American public.

To better understand your haphazard decision to purge ACIP and replace its members with your hand-picked panel, which includes unqualified and unvetted vaccine skeptics with their own troubling conflicts of interest, I request responses to the following questions by July 8, 2025.

1. For each of the 17 recently terminated members of the ACIP panel, please provide the specific reason for their termination.
2. Please detail the process by which the eight newly appointed ACIP members were chosen.
3. How were these eight members vetted to ensure that they had adequate qualifications?
4. How were their conflicts of interest vetted to ensure compliance with conflict-of-interest laws and the requirements of the ACIP charter?
 - a. Please provide copies of all conflict of interest filings provided by current ACIP members.
5. With regard to this week’s ACIP meetings, and other upcoming meetings, what conflicts of interest requirements will ACIP members need to adhere to?
 - a. Will ACIP members be subject to ongoing conflict of interest monitoring throughout their tenure?
 - b. Will members be required to disclose any relevant conflicts of interest?
 - c. Will members be required to recuse from any votes or discussion on matters in which they have a conflict of interest?
6. Will any member receive a waiver from conflict-of-interest requirements? If so, will you disclose these waivers?


³² U.S. Senate Committee on Finance, “Hearing to consider the nomination Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., of California, to be Secretary of Health and Human Services,” January 29, 2025, Transcript at 2:10:22, <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>.

³³ U.S. Senate Committee on Finance, “Hearing to consider the nomination Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., of California, to be Secretary of Health and Human Services,” January 29, 2025, Transcript at 2:12:07, <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>.

³⁴ STAT, “RFK Jr.’s new vaccine panel raises questions of how Kennedy defines conflicts of interest,” Chelsea Cirruzzo, June 13, 2025, <https://www.statnews.com/2025/06/13/rfk-jr-vaccine-panel-replacements-bring-new-conflicts-vaccine-skepticism-to-cdc-acip/>.

7. Do you intend to name any other panel members, and if so, what vetting and conflicts of interest requirements will they be subject to prior to taking a position on the panel?

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator