VACCINATE YOUR FAMILY

IMMUNIZE

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November 17, 2026

The Honorable Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave SW
Washington, DC 20001

The Honorable Erica Schwartz, MD, MPH, JD
Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30239

Dear Secretary Kennedy and Director Schwartz:

We, the undersigned organizations representing our nation's clinicians, public health professionals, scientists, vaccine advocates, and community members, write to share our perspective on the recent loss of the United States' measles elimination status. This status was earned in the year 2000 after many years of coordinated work across federal health agencies, states, and local communities to increase vaccination coverage rates (VCRs) and improve the health of our nation.

We urge the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and its agencies, particularly the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), to comply with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) Regional Verification Commission's (RVC) recommendations to regain measles elimination status.

In November, the PAHO RVC met to review the measles elimination status in the U.S., officially declaring the loss of our measles elimination status due to ongoing transmission and outbreaks.

The loss of our measles elimination status is not a surprise. It is the expected result of decreasing VCRs[1] and the record-breaking large-scale measles outbreaks that began in January 2025.[2]

[1] KFF. Kindergarten routine vaccination rates continue to decline. Accessed September 21, 2026. https://www.kff.org/medicaid/kindergarten-routine-vaccination-rates-continue-to-decline/
[2] John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. International Vaccine Access Center. Tracking measles cases in the U.S. Accessed November 16, 2026. https://publichealth.jhu.edu/ivac/resources/us-measles-tracker

This grim milestone marks a crossroads. As of November 13, the U.S. has recorded 5,739 confirmed cases in 2026,[3] and states have reported 13 measles-associated deaths since 2025.[4] Our nation can decide to continue on this destructive path for our nation's health, or actively partner with local communities, states, and the RVC to stop measles and other vaccine-preventable diseases.

The data is clear. Vaccination is the best way to prevent measles outbreaks and with sustained, high rates of vaccination in communities, our nation is protected against measles. Without community VCRs of approximately 95%[5], susceptible individuals are at risk of outbreaks. These rates are declining nationwide, with measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccination coverage insufficient to prevent outbreaks in 39 states.[6] Among the over 5,000 measles cases, only 3% have been among vaccinated individuals.[7]

Measles is a dangerous disease with no antiviral or other effective pharmacological therapy. Measles can cause infection in the lungs, leading to pneumonia. Before the vaccine was available the disease led to about 500 deaths every year in the U.S.[8]

About one in 1,000 people infected with measles can develop encephalitis[9], and about one in five unvaccinated people who contract measles will need to be hospitalized.[10] The consequences of measles can extend years after infection, including subacute sclerosing panencephalitis (SSPE) or immune amnesia.[11]

Beyond the human toll, measles is taxing local and state health departments already facing financial challenges due to increased vaccine hesitancy, rising costs, and new public health threats. A recent case study in New Mexico demonstrates those costs, with a 100-case measles outbreak costing the state over $5.4 million to address, with an average cost per case of $53,000 and over 22,000 staff hours dedicated to the response.[12]

We must remember these outbreaks are preventable. Measles vaccines have been available since the 1960s.[13] The U.S. outbreaks are not happening in isolation, with case counts increasing

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[3] Ibid
[4]NPR. US has lost measles elimination status, global health authorities say. Accessed November 16, 2026. https://www.npr.org/2026/11/14/nx-s1-6041119/us-measles-elimination-status-vaccines-cdc-paho
[5] History of Vaccines. How Herd Immunity Works. Accessed September 21, 2026. https://historyofvaccines.org/vaccines-101/what-do-vaccines-do/how-herd-immunity-works/
[6] KFF. Kindergarten routine vaccination rates continue to decline. Accessed September 21, 2026. https://www.kff.org/medicaid/kindergarten-routine-vaccination-rates-continue-to-decline/
[7] John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. International Vaccine Access Center. Tracking measles cases in the U.S. Accessed November 16, 2026. https://publichealth.jhu.edu/ivac/resources/us-measles-tracker
[8] Infectious Disease Society of America. Measles vaccination: know the facts. Accessed September 8, 2026. https://www.idsociety.org/ID-topics/infectious-disease/measles/know-the-facts
[9] Ibid
[10] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Measles Symptoms and Complications. Accessed October 29, 2026. https://www.cdc.gov/measles/signs-symptoms/index.html
[11] Ibid
[12] CIDRAP. New Mexico's 2025 measles outbreak cost $5.4 million. Accessed September 21, 2026. https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/measles/new-mexicos-2025-measles-outbreak-cost-54-million.
[13] Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR): The Diseases & Vaccines. Accessed September 21, 2026. https://www.chop.edu/vaccine-education-center/vaccine-details/measles-mumps-and-rubella-vaccines

across the Americas in 2025.[14] Instead of working to address these outbreaks, HHS' actions on vaccines have decreased trust in our national immunization schedules.[15] In contrast, Canada has worked to implement the RVC's recommendations to regain measles elimination status.[16] Looking at the 2026 data in Canada, cases have decreased over the course of the year, resulting in an almost 80% decrease compared to 2025 cases.[17] Canada's example shows that with targeted outreach, increased resources, and clear, evidence-based communications around vaccines, we can start to rebuild trust, increase uptake, and reduce the risk of further outbreaks.

We urge you to actively engage PAHO, partner with state and local health departments, and implement nationwide efforts to increase measles vaccination. Together, we can chart a different course for the next 12 months with the goal of regaining our measles elimination status. Our organizations stand at the ready to assist you in these efforts. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

For questions, please contact Lecia Imbery, Government Affairs Director at Vaccinate Your Family, at lecia@vaccinateyourfamily.org.

Sincerely,

Alanas Foundation

Alliance for Women's Health and Prevention

American Academy of Family Physicians

American Academy of Pediatrics

American College of Chest Physicians

American College of Clinical Pharmacy

American College of Obstetricians & Gynecologists

American Families for Vaccines

American Lung Association

American Medical Association

American Public Health Association

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[14] Pan American Health Organization. Sustained increase in measles cases prompts the Americas to strengthen surveillance, rapid response and vaccination efforts. Rev Panam Salud Publica. 2026 Feb 27;50:e25. doi: 10.26633/RPSP.2026.25. PMID: 41767604; PMCID: PMC12947294.
[15] Scientific American. Americans' trust in federal vaccine recommendations declines markedly under Trump. Accessed September 21, 2026. https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/americans-trust-in-the-cdc-vaccine-recommendations-declines-under-trump/
[16] Government of Canada. Measles: Canada's Response. Accessed September 21, 2026. https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/measles/canada-response.html
[17] Government of Canada. Measles and rubella weekly monitoring report. Accessed October 28, 2026. https://health-infobase.canada.ca/measles-rubella/

American Society for Meningitis Prevention

Arizona Bioindustry Association, Inc. (AZBio)

Arizona Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics

Arizona Families for Vaccines

Big Cities Health Coalition

California Immunization Coalition

Colorado Families for Vaccines

Doctors for America

Emily Stillman Foundation

Families Fighting Flu

Families USA

First Focus Campaign for Children

Franny Strong Foundation

Gerontological Society of America

HealthyWomen

Hep B Free Arizona

IDSA

Immunization Action Coalition of Washington

Immunize Illinois Coalition

ImmunizeVA

Indiana Immunization Coalition

Institute for Public Health Innovation

Kimberly Coffey Foundation

Louisiana Families for Vaccines

Massachusetts Families for Vaccines

Michigan Council for Maternal and Child Health

Michigan For Vaccines

Michigan State Medical Society

Montana Families for Vaccines

National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners

National Coalition for Infant Health

National Foundation for Infectious Diseases

National Hispanic Medical Association

NH Families for Vaccines

NVax

Oregon Families for Vaccines

Partnership to Fight Infectious Disease (PFID)

Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society

Pediatric Nurse Practitioner House Calls PLLC

Public Health - Seattle & King County

South Carolina Families for Vaccines

South Dakota Families for Vaccines

Southern Alliance for Public Health Leadership

Tennessee Families for Vaccines

The Arizona Partnership for Immunization (TAPI)

The Immunization Partnership

Trust for America's Health

Tulsa Area Immunization Coalition

Vaccinate Your Family

Weill Cornell Medicine Department of Pediatrics

West Virginia Families for Vaccines

Winona County Health and Human Services

Wisconsin Families for Vaccines

Yavapai County Education Service Agency