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Leading Medical Professional Societies, Patient Sue HHS, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. for Unlawful, Unilateral Vaccine Changes

AAP, ACP, APHA, IDSA, MPHA, and SMFM Join Together to Stop Assault on Public Health

BOSTON – July 7, 2025 – Today, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), American College of Physicians (ACP), American Public Health Association (APHA), Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA), Massachusetts Public Health Alliance (MPHA), Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine (SMFM), and a pregnant physician, filed suit in *American Academy of Pediatrics v. Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.* in the U.S. District Court for the District of Massachusetts to defend vaccine policy, and to put an end to the Secretary's assault on science, public health and evidence-based medicine.

Plaintiffs in the case are suing the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Secretary Kennedy for acting arbitrarily and capriciously when he unilaterally changed Covid-19 vaccine recommendations for children and pregnant people. Secretary Kennedy has also unjustly dismissed 17 members of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) and appointed replacements who have historically espoused anti-vaccine viewpoints. This committee has proceeded to undermine the science behind vaccine recommendations. The lawsuit asks for preliminary and permanent injunctions to enjoin Secretary Kennedy's rescissions of Covid vaccine recommendations and a declaratory judgment pronouncing the change in recommendations as unlawful.

"This administration is an existential threat to vaccination in America, and those in charge are only just getting started. If left unchecked, Secretary Kennedy will accomplish his goal of ridding the United States of vaccines, which would unleash a wave of preventable harm on our nation's children," said Richard H. Hughes IV, partner at Epstein Becker Green and lead counsel for the plaintiffs. "The professional associations for pediatricians, internal medicine physicians, infectious disease physicians, high-risk pregnancy physicians, and public health

professionals will not stand idly by as our system of prevention is dismantled. This ends now."

The lawsuit charges that a coordinated set of actions by HHS and Secretary Kennedy were designed to mislead, confuse, and gradually desensitize the public to anti-vaccine and anti-science rhetoric, and that he has routinely flouted federal procedural rules. These actions include blocking CDC communications, unexplained cancellations of vaccine panel meetings at the FDA and CDC, announcing studies to investigate non-existent links between vaccines and autism, unilaterally overriding immunization recommendations, and replacing the diverse members of ACIP with a slate of individuals biased against sound vaccine facts.

The anonymous individual plaintiff in the lawsuit is a pregnant woman who is at immediate risk for being unable to get the Covid-19 vaccine booster because of the Secretarial Directive, despite her high risk for exposure to infectious diseases from working as a physician at a hospital.

The plaintiff organizations urge parents and patients to follow their qualified medical professionals' vaccine guidance. AAP, ACP, APHA, IDSA, and SMFM websites provide evidence-based resources to help patients make decisions grounded in facts, not fear.

PLAINTIFF QUOTES:

Susan J. Kressly, M.D., FAAP, President, AAP:
"The American Academy of Pediatrics is alarmed by recent decisions by HHS to alter the routine childhood immunization schedule. These decisions are founded in fear and not evidence, and will make our children and communities more vulnerable to infectious diseases like measles, whooping cough, and influenza. Our immunization system has long been a cornerstone of U.S. public health, but actions by the current administration are jeopardizing its success. As we pursue action to restore science to U.S. vaccination policy, AAP will continue to provide the science-based, trusted recommendations that every American deserves."

Jason M. Goldman, MD, MACP, President, ACP:
"The American College of Physicians is highly concerned about the administration's recent actions regarding ACIP and the negative impact it will have on our patients and our physician practices. Destabilizing a trusted source and its evidence-based process for helping guide decision-making for vaccines to protect the public health in our country erodes public confidence in our government's ability to ensure the health of the American public and contributes to confusion and uncertainty. As physicians, we require reliable, science-based guidance that is based on the best available evidence, developed through an evidence-based and transparent process, to ensure the safety, welfare, and lives of our patients."

Georges C. Benjamin, MD, Executive Director, APHA:

“The entire health sector — including federal, state, and local health regulatory authorities, insurance companies, and private or public entities like employers and educational systems — relies upon transparent and evidence-based vaccine guidance from the federal government. When based on evaluation of the most up-to-date science by qualified experts, this guidance provides a roadmap to the use of vaccines to save lives and strengthen communities’ ability to thrive and achieve optimal health. When disproven theories become a driving force in policymaking decisions and alter this ethical process, lives are lost and people suffer needlessly.”

Tina Tan, MD, FIDSA, FPIDS, FAAP, President, IDSA:
“The Infectious Diseases Society of America will fight to ensure that all individuals of every age have access to life-saving vaccines. We will not stand by while a single federal official unilaterally and effectively strips Americans of their choice to vaccinate with actions that thoroughly disregard overwhelming scientific evidence and decades of established federal processes. As a community of clinicians, public health officials, and scientists, our focus remains the protection of patients and public health.”

Carlene Pavlos, Executive Director, MPHA:
“MPHA is deeply troubled by Secretary Kennedy’s recent directive, which destroys public confidence in the safety and efficacy of vaccines to the detriment of the public’s health. Vaccines are one of the greatest achievements of biomedical science and public health, preventing enormous suffering and premature death. Decades of strategic vaccination campaigns virtually *eliminated* diseases previously common in the U.S., and recent COVID-19 vaccinations are estimated to have saved nearly 20 million lives globally. Secretary Kennedy’s actions are not only dangerous for pregnant women and children, but they also represent a retreat from 60+ years of evidence-based health policy. MPHA is committed to working with public health allies and our members to mitigate the consequences of this dangerous directive in Massachusetts.”

Sindhu K. Srinivas, MD, MSCE, President, SMFM:
“Secretary Kennedy’s changes to vaccine recommendations have frustrated our members’ ability to effectively counsel patients regarding the COVID-19 vaccine and compromised the standard of care. Every second the Secretary’s dangerous and unsupported decisions regarding the COVID-19 vaccines stay in effect, the Directive is putting up barriers for our members’ high-risk pregnant patients to access the COVID-19 vaccine, which is increasing the risk of serious infection and illness and eroding patient trust in all recommended vaccinations.”

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The American Academy of Pediatrics *is an organization of 67,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists, and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety, and well-being of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults.*

The American College of Physicians *is the largest medical specialty organization in the United States, with members in more than 172 countries worldwide. ACP membership includes 161,000 internal medicine physicians, related subspecialists, and medical students. Internal medicine physicians are specialists who apply scientific knowledge and clinical expertise to the diagnosis, treatment, and compassionate care of adults across the spectrum from health to complex illness.*

The American Public Health Association *serves as a convenor, catalyst, and advocate to build capacity in the public health community. We speak out for public health issues and policies backed by science. With our broad-based member community and 150-year perspective, we influence federal policy to improve the public's health. We lead public awareness campaigns such as Get Ready and National Public Health Week. Together, we are creating optimal, equitable health and well-being for all.*

The Infectious Diseases Society of America *is a global community of 13,000 clinicians, scientists, and public health experts working together to solve humanity's smallest and greatest challenges, from tiny microbes to global outbreaks. Rooted in science, committed to health equity and driven by curiosity, our compassionate and knowledgeable members safeguard the health of individuals, our communities, and the world by advancing the treatment and prevention of infectious diseases.*

The ***Massachusetts Public Health Alliance*** *is a nonprofit organization that promotes and improves the health of all residents of the Commonwealth and fosters conditions for people to achieve their full health potential.*

The ***Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine****, founded in 1977, is the medical professional society for obstetricians who have additional training in high-risk, complicated pregnancies. SMFM represents more than 6,500 members who care for high-risk pregnant people and provides education, promotes research, and engages in advocacy to reduce disparities and optimize the health of high-risk pregnant people and their families. SMFM and its members are dedicated to optimizing maternal and fetal outcomes and assuring medically appropriate treatment options are available to all patients.*