

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 18, 2025

The Honorable Susan Monarez, PhD
Acting Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30329

Dear Acting Director Monarez,

We write to you with deep concern and grave urgency regarding the unprecedented spread of measles across the United States, with Texas at the epicenter of this alarming crisis. Since late January, the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) has reported 259 confirmed cases of measles and 34 hospitalizations. Tragically, a school-aged child passed away after contracting the disease.¹ Additional cases of measles have been reported in at least a dozen other states across the country, as well as a second tragic death in New Mexico.² Measles is a highly infectious respiratory virus that spreads rapidly without immediate intervention. The current outbreak has primarily affected school-aged children, highlighting the urgent need to support the state of Texas' efforts to contain its spread and prevent further loss of life. We are troubled that anti-vaccine misinformation, cuts to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) workforce, and reductions of public health funding will threaten the country's ability to respond to the current measles outbreak, and future public health threats.

Thanks to the development and distribution of the Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR) vaccine, measles, a disease which once infected every child and killed thousands of Americans annually, was declared eradicated from the U.S. in 2000.³ Despite overwhelming scientific evidence supporting the safety and effectiveness of the MMR vaccine, the Administration has spread dangerous misinformation discouraging immunization. Under-vaccination has posed the biggest threat to the proliferation of measles in America, and anti-vaccine rhetoric has resulted in significant reductions in vaccination coverage in kindergartners.⁴ Your agency's webpage "Measles Cases and Outbreaks" explicitly states the MMR vaccine is "very safe and effective."⁵ It is indisputable that the MMR vaccine saves lives. Despite this proven fact, on March 11, 2025, on Fox News' television program "Hannity," the HHS Secretary stated that the "natural immunity" acquired after contracting measles is more effective than the vaccine.^{6,7} Suggesting

¹ Texas Department of State Health Services, "Measles Outbreak 2025." <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/news-alerts/measles-outbreak-2025>

² Associated Press, "Measles Outbreak Spreads in Texas and New Mexico Amid Rising Vaccine Hesitancy." <https://apnews.com/article/measles-outbreak-texas-new-mexico-vaccine-rfk-d5444b3397ac7c4034e63becc219aa33>

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Measles History." <https://www.cdc.gov/measles/about/history.html>

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Measles Data and Research." <https://www.cdc.gov/measles/data-research/index.html>

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ USTVDB. "Hannity." <https://ustvdb.com/networks/fox-news/shows/hannity/>

⁷ Fox News. "RFK Jr. on Measles Vaccine and Natural Immunity." <https://www.foxnews.com/video/6369907937112>

that children are better off contracting measles during an unprecedented outbreak is not only dangerous, but instills further distrust in the very safe and effective MMR vaccine amongst Americans.

As local pharmacies report shortages of MMR vaccine doses, the Administration has shipped doses of Vitamin A to Texas, endorsing its use in addition to cod liver oil to reduce the outbreak, neither of which are scientifically proven to reduce the spread of the disease.⁸ We are concerned that, while the CDC has explicitly stated its efforts are “science-based” and “data-driven,” recent actions have suggested otherwise.⁹

We are further concerned that the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) has undertaken reckless actions that are obstructing the CDC’s public health response. On February 13, 2025, your agency announced the mass layoff of 1,300 CDC employees.¹⁰ To date, at least 750 employees have been laid off, which include key scientists tasked with helping state and local officials respond to outbreaks like the one Texas is experiencing right now.¹¹ We believe these indiscriminate mass firings have weakened the nation’s ability to contain the current measles outbreak. Despite a small number of CDC employees being asked to return, looming layoffs impart uncertainty for remaining CDC employees, which may cause officers to seek out other jobs, further reducing our capacity to respond in real-time to disease outbreaks.

Additionally, we are deeply troubled by the CDC’s delayed and insufficient updates on the scope of the current measles outbreak. On January 31, 2025, several critical CDC webpages were taken down.¹² The agency’s decision to temporarily provide monthly updates, rather than weekly, resulted in delayed information necessary to stop case spread. While the agency has returned to weekly reports, a month of no information or guidance hampered local efforts to contain the outbreak. These delays and discrepancies are not merely technical failures; they reflect a broader problem of insufficient transparency. Timely reporting is critical for controlling outbreaks, and the inability to respond in real time to the urgent needs of communities only delays crucial interventions.

The CDC is a key source of support for our state and local health departments, and we are concerned that efforts to reduce public health funding will further weaken your agency’s ability to support departments across the country. With more than 70 percent of the CDC’s budget directly supporting state and local health efforts, including disease prevention efforts, any disruptions will have catastrophic consequences for outbreak response and prevention.¹³ The

⁸ Dallas News, “Vitamin A, Cod Liver Oil—Experts Say There’s No Replacement for Measles Vaccination.”

<https://www.dallasnews.com/news/public-health/2025/03/06/vitamin-a-cod-liver-oil-experts-say-theres-no-replacement-for-measles-vaccination/>

⁹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). “About CDC.” <https://www.cdc.gov/about/cdc/index.html#:~:text=The%20plan%20continues%20to%20leverage,manner%20as%20quickly%20as%20possible.>

¹⁰ Fox 5 Atlanta, “CDC Layoffs: 1,300 Employees Let Go.” <https://www.fox5atlanta.com/news/cdc-layoffs-two-fired-employees-among-1300-let-go-government-overhaul>

¹¹ NPR, “Federal Employee Layoffs at CDC, NIH, FDA.” <https://www.npr.org/sections/shots-health-news/2025/02/17/nx-s1-5300052/federal-employees-layoffs-cdc-nih-fda>

¹² Kaiser Family Foundation, “A Look at Federal Health Data Taken Offline.” <https://www.kff.org/policy-watch/a-look-at-federal-health-data-taken-offline/>

¹³ American Public Health Association, “CDC Budget and Funding.” https://www.apha.org/-/media/files/pdf/advocacy/speak/200611_cdc_hrsa.pdf

CDC requires adequate resources and personnel to quickly and effectively protect Americans from domestic health threats by preventing, detecting, and responding to the spread of disease. To date, there has been a single tweet posted stating that your agency has sent experts to our home state under the Epi-Aid partnership, which only provides support for one to three weeks. We are deeply concerned that the actions of DOGE have significantly undermined both the necessary rapid response to this outbreak and long-term public health demands.¹⁴

Given the severity of this crisis, we urgently request detailed answers to the following questions:

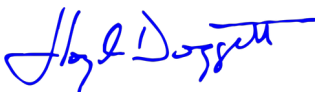
1. What specific actions has the CDC taken in coordination with the Texas DSHS to mitigate the current measles outbreak in Texas?
2. How have recent reductions in the number of CDC personnel impacted the agency's capacity to respond effectively to the ongoing disease outbreak?
3. Have DOGE's efforts, particularly the disruption of federal resources, interfered with funding flows to Texas state and local health departments in their fight against this outbreak?
4. How does the CDC plan to uphold its mission to remain science-based and data-driven, contrary to the dangerous and misleading comments made by the HHS Secretary regarding measles and the safety of the MMR vaccine?
5. Has CDC leadership advocated against proposals to cut the agency's budget, and do you acknowledge that any reduction in funding would significantly weaken the nation's public health infrastructure, particularly in responding to infectious disease outbreaks?

Please provide a response by March 25, 2025. The people of Texas, and the entire country, rely on your agency's leadership to address this outbreak and ensure that no more children suffer preventable harm. We look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Marc A. Veasey
Member of Congress



Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress



Lizzie Fletcher
Member of Congress

¹⁴ American Hospital Association (AHA). "CDC Partners with Texas Officials for Measles Outbreak Response." <https://www.aha.org/news/headline/2025-03-05-cdc-partners-texas-officials-measles-outbreak-response>



Greg Casar
Member of Congress



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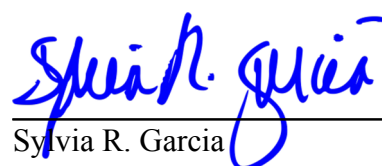
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