

August 29, 2025

The Honorable Ron Wyden  
Chairman, Committee on Finance  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mike Crapo  
Ranking Member, Committee on Finance  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Wyden and Ranking Member Crapo,

On behalf of the American College of Rheumatology (ACR), representing over 10,000 rheumatologists and rheumatology interprofessional team members, I am writing to express our deep concern regarding the unrest that threatens the scientific integrity of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) prior the Committee's examination of recent actions taken by Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. which appear to undermine evidence-based vaccine policy in the United States.

The ACR is committed to advancing the health of patients living with autoimmune and inflammatory diseases—many of whom rely on vaccines to prevent serious infections due to immunosuppressive therapies. Adults and children with rheumatic disease represent a vulnerable population who require protection against infection not only from their own response to vaccination, but from the immunity of the surrounding population.

The ACR supports the historically rigorous scientific process of the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) as well as its development of recommended immunization schedules for the U.S. population as a means of protecting vulnerable patients with rheumatic diseases. This is why the abrupt dismissal of all members of ACIP and the appointment of individuals whose views diverge from established scientific consensus raised serious concerns for our members about the future of vaccine guidance in this country, which we shared in a letter to Secretary Kennedy in June.

Equally troubling now are the policy implications around the termination of CDC Director Dr. Susan Monarez, allegedly for resisting pressure to endorse unscientific changes to vaccine schedules. If Director Monarez was in fact removed from her position for fighting to preserve science-based vaccine decisions, then the impact of the new policies which her removal may have cleared the way for will further erode public trust in vaccines, the CDC, and public health in this country.

These actions, coupled with the resignation of several other senior CDC officials, suggest a pattern that threatens the role of science in policymaking, the credibility of our public health institutions, and the safety of vulnerable patient populations.

The ACR urges the Senate Finance Committee to exercise its oversight authority during the hearing this week on The President's 2026 Health Care Agenda and seek answers to the following from Secretary Kennedy:

1. The rationale and process behind the dismissal and reconstitution of ACIP.
2. The nature of any policy divergence which may have led to the termination of Dr. Monarez so quickly after being nominated by this administration and confirmed on July 29.
3. The qualifications that will be required of a replacement for Dr. Monarez, which would avoid the same conflict while adhering to data-backed medical science.
4. The implications of these changes for immunization guidance, particularly for immunocompromised populations.

Patients with rheumatic diseases depend on clear, evidence-based vaccine recommendations to protect their health. Undermining the CDC's authority and replacing medical expert voices with ideologically driven appointees jeopardizes not only public health but also the trust clinicians and patients place in our nation's health agencies.

We appreciate your leadership and urge you to use this opportunity to ensure that HHS and CDC remain committed to scientific integrity and the protection of public health.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Carol A. Langford". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Carol" being more prominent than the last name "Langford".

Carol A. Langford, MD, MHS  
President, American College of Rheumatology

CC: Members of the Committee on Finance  
Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee Chairman Bernie Sanders  
Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee Ranking Member Bill Cassidy, MD