AVAC Condemns Removal of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices

Vaccines work and save lives. But RFK Jr. removed all vaccine experts on a committee that develops vaccine policies and advises the CDC.

June 13, 2025 By AVAC

AVAC strongly condemns Secretary of Health and Human Services, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., for removing all members of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). This committee of vaccine experts—with decades of experience in vaccine development, delivery and safety—is responsible for developing the country's vaccine policies and recommendations for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). At a time when science is under political attack and vital programs are being defunded, AVAC stands with researchers, advocates, and communities calling for Congress to defend public health and unbiased science, which is essential to safeguarding the health of all Americans. The Secretary's actions attack the integrity of ACIP membership and [are] a direct threat to public trust in our health systems and in the essential role of vaccines in disease prevention.

"Secretary Kennedy's short-sighted and unceremonious removal of all #ACIP members is an alarming escalation in this administration's campaign to dismantle evidence-based health policy, #science and research," said our ED. Read AVAC's statement: avac.org/blog/avac-co...@gappdc.bsky.social #HIV

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— AVAC (@avac.org) June 12, 2025 at 9:17 AM

“Vaccines remain among the most powerful public health tools ever developed,” said Mitchell Warren, executive director of AVAC. “Vaccines have transformed the global response to infectious diseases, from smallpox to measles to COVID-19, and they are central to the vision of ending the HIV epidemic. At a moment when the U.S. should be investing more in vaccine science, access, and public confidence, it is investing less and simultaneously undermining vaccines generally. Secretary Kennedy’s short-sighted and unceremonious removal of all ACIP members is an alarming escalation in this administration’s campaign to dismantle evidence-based health policy, science and research.”

ACIP’s long-standing commitment to base vaccine recommendations purely on the evidence represents the highest standards of ethical guidance to protect human health. The Secretary’s decision undermines not just U.S. vaccine strategy, but global confidence in immunization programs and guidance that have long relied on U.S. leadership. In addition, Kennedy appointed a new panel of members yesterday, many of whom have shared publicly their anti-vaccine views, with limited experience in vaccine policy or public health. This new panel could take actions that turn this trusted scientific body into a platform for mis- and dis-information and anti-vaccine policies.

The destruction of ACIP adds to the five-month litany of assaults on vaccines and the systems that support them. From proposed cuts to the Fiscal Year 2026 budget, to the defunding for global vaccine access programs like Gavi and domestic immunization initiatives at the U.S. CDC, to the undermining of the essential role of measles vaccines, the closure of the leading NIH-funded HIV vaccine consortia (CHAVD), to the dismantling of USAID’s HIV vaccine R&D programs and the recommendation to remove COVID-19 vaccines from the U.S. immunization schedule for children and pregnant women, this administration has worked to subvert the importance and impact of life-saving vaccines and erode public trust for vaccine science.

Vaccines work. Human papillomavirus (HPV) is responsible for 99% of cervical cancers. The HPV vaccine prevents over 90% of cancers caused by HPV, including anal, cervical, penile, throat, vaginal and vulvar globally, and if more widely available, could prevent hundreds of thousands of annual deaths, according to the WHO. Similarly, hepatitis B (HBV) accounts for 1.1 million deaths globally, and yet the HBV vaccine prevents as many deaths every year, according to WHO. Furthermore, without a vaccine review panel, rollout of anticipated vaccines that protect against gonorrhea could make access difficult for many Americans when drug resistant gonorrhea is on the rise globally.

“We are witnessing other countries eliminate cervical cancer through robust HPV vaccination and screening programs while the U.S. risks reversing decades of progress,” says Alison Footman,

AVAC's senior program manager of STIs. "The ACIP plays a critical role in ensuring vaccines, including those that prevent STIs like HPV and hepatitis B, are accessible, and recommendations are guided by expert opinions. Now more than ever, we must protect the integrity of public health systems that save lives and prevent diseases."

As public confidence in vaccines erodes, the value of vaccine science is paramount, representing one of the single greatest advances in the history of medical science, eradicating once life-threatening infections and mitigating the risk of illness from numerous diseases. In the field of HIV, the search for an effective vaccine is advancing thanks to decades of investment in basic science, clinical research and global partnerships. This progress must be protected and accelerated. A vaccine would provide a durable, scalable form of HIV prevention that does not rely on frequent adherence or health system access, and it would be especially transformative for communities most marginalized by current systems.

AVAC calls on Congress, scientists and civil society to speak out and stand up for science, for vaccines and for the future of global and public health.

This statement was published by AVAC on June 11, 2025. AVAC is an international non-profit organization that leverages its independent voice and global partnerships to accelerate ethical development and equitable delivery of effective HIV prevention options, as part of a comprehensive and integrated pathway to global health equity.

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http://beta.docker.realhealthmag.com/article/avac-condemns-removal-advisory-committee-immunization-practices