

VIEWPOINT

We are **Nurses who Stand Up for Health** during this extraordinary time of transition in the U.S. Nurses are highly qualified and trusted members of the medical team who care for the health of people and entire communities. We are a passionate team of highly educated nurses - with masters' or doctoral degrees - and a wide range of clinical experiences. We are nurse practitioners, school nurse leaders, environmental health researchers, and health policy experts. We take responsibility to care for and give voice to those in need.

We see an urgent need to preserve the exceptional public health advances our country has achieved over the past several decades. Our country needs us now more than ever to stand up for health.

We count on the Senate to put the health of the nation first and not confirm Robert F. Kennedy Jr. (RFK Jr) as the Secretary for the Department of Health and Human Services.

We affirm:

Health is neither political nor partisan. Health is more than the absence of disease. Public health is the foundation of a healthy society, free of disease and disability.

Public health is essential to economic prosperity. If workers are sick, they are not productive. Workers need their health to be a productive member of society.

If governmental leaders are not qualified, there are consequences. We would not recommend taking your car to a nurse to fix it. Just as you would not call a car mechanic or a lawyer to care for people during a flu outbreak. We need a head of Health and Human Services who is qualified and has a broad understanding of public health. RFK Jr has neither.

Trust in science is essential to making good decisions about the health of the public. Science and regulatory agencies provide the best guidance to make reasonable decisions about health. If we ignore science, we are destined to go back to a time in the not too distant past when, for example, children died from (now) preventable childhood illnesses.

Whereas:

The mission of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is to enhance the health and well-being of all Americans, by providing for effective health and human services and by fostering sound, sustained advances in the sciences underlying medicine, public health, and social services <https://www.hhs.gov/about/index.html>. The Secretary oversees 11 agencies impacting the health and well-being of Americans, and should have the medical and administration background to effectively manage the agencies under his or her charge.

Whoever is selected to lead the DHHS must have a broad vision of public health and the qualifications necessary to evaluate and employ proven strategies based on science. RFK Jr does not have the necessary qualifications to lead DHHS. The head of DHHS needs to move the nation forward, not backwards, basing decisions on the known public health successes and the latest science.

Confirming RFK Jr as Secretary of Health and Human Services is illogical. RFK tries to sell his vision that we were healthier before we had vaccines, pasteurization of milk, and fluoridation of water. This is not true. A lawyer or someone with no medical or public health background in charge of the nation's health

constitutes medical malpractice on a national scale. His call to eviscerate the vaccine program risks our children's lives, subjecting them to potentially fatal diseases that currently exist only in the least developed nations.

RFK Jr has a long history of being skeptical of vaccines. He would take us back to an era of sickness by stopping the clear march forward to population health. It has only been a generation since polio was a devastating illness, vaccines work! Between 1993 and 2023, routine vaccinations in the United States prevented 508 million cases of disease or death with direct savings of \$540 billion. We can recall a time when we and those around us, missed weeks of school with measles, rubella, and chickenpox, to name a few. We knew people who suffered lifelong consequences of polio and they were hospitalized or even died of measles, chickenpox, and whooping cough. Fortunately, most people vaccinate their children today, trusting the public health guidance and clear evidence that vaccines will improve their lives. A leader who is skeptical of these benefits can harm us for generations to come.

Do we want to risk making Americans sick again? Do we want to return to a time when society expected children to die young? We would rather celebrate the long and healthy lives of our children, thanks to public health. Younger generations who have benefited from the monumental public health interventions such as vaccines [1] should not be taken back to the era of our childhood. Vaccines are only one example of effective public health in a great nation. Clean air, avoidance of carcinogens in our soil and water, pasteurized milk that does not contain tuberculosis or avian flu are other hallmarks of a great nation.

Therefore:

Do not confirm Robert F. Kennedy Jr as the Secretary for the Department of Health and Human Services. He is not qualified and would risk endangering the public's health if RFK Jr is charged with leading DHHS.

NursesStandUp4Health

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1. Roush SW, Murphy TV, Vaccine-Preventable Disease Table Working Group a. Historical Comparisons of Morbidity and Mortality for Vaccine-Preventable Diseases in the United States. JAMA. 2007; 298(19): 2155-2163. doi:10.1001/jama.298.18.2155.