

ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
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February 2, 2015

The Honorable Fred Upton
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Joe Pitts
Chairman
Subcommittee on Health
Committee on Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Tim Murphy
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
Committee on Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Upton, Chairman Pitts, and Chairman Murphy:

We are writing to urge you to hold a hearing on the current measles outbreak and the importance of vaccinations to prevent the further spread of measles. The California-centered outbreak, which began at Disneyland in December 2014, has now led to over 100 measles cases in 14 states.¹

Measles is an infectious disease that is prevalent in many parts of the world. Each year, approximately 20 million are infected worldwide and 122,000 people die due to the disease.²

¹ *Obama to parents doubting 'indisputable' science: 'Get your kids vaccinated'*, Washington Post (Feb. 2, 2015).

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Measles cases in the United States reach 20-year high* (May 29, 2014) (press release).

Measles is a highly transmissible viral disease. In the decade before the measles vaccine was introduced in the United States, more than three million individuals were infected each year.³ It is estimated that 90% of people exposed to the disease will be infected unless they have been vaccinated. Since the introduction of the combination MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) vaccine, there has been a 99% reduction in the number of measles cases, relative to the pre-vaccine era.⁴

In 2000, measles was declared eliminated in the United States.⁵ Public health experts determined that the U.S. was able to eliminate measles because of a highly effective vaccination program and a strong public health system to detect and respond to outbreaks. However, in 2008, the U.S. experienced several outbreaks in communities with groups of unvaccinated people.⁶ And 2014 saw a record number of measles cases, with 644 cases in 27 states, the highest number in the United States since 2000. CDC experts attribute these recent outbreaks to (1) more measles cases than usual in countries Americans travel to, and (2) the spreading of measles in pockets of unvaccinated individuals in the United States.

The current measles outbreak originated at Disneyland in Anaheim, California in December 2014.⁷ The outbreak has spread beyond those who visited Disneyland and is infecting people in the broader community. The bulk of the cases are in California, where one in four patients have been hospitalized. There are also several confirmed cases in Arizona, and state public health officials have warned that the outbreak has reached “a critical point.”⁸ For the 42 patients for whom vaccination status is known, 34 were unvaccinated and three received partial vaccinations.⁹ Public health officials have emphasized that vaccination is the most important

³ A Project of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, *Measles* (online at www.historyofvaccines.org/content/timelines/measles).

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Measles – Q&A about Disease & Vaccine* (online at www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/measles/faqs-dis-vac-risks.htm).

⁵ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Frequently Asked Questions about Measles in the U.S.* (online at www.cdc.gov/measles/about/faqs.html).

⁶ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Measles Cases and Outbreaks* (online at www.cdc.gov/measles/cases-outbreaks.html).

⁷ *Measles outbreak: At least 95 cases in eight states and Mexico*; Los Angeles Times (Jan. 28, 2015).

⁸ *Arizona measles outbreak reaches ‘critical point’*, USA Today (Jan. 28, 2015).

⁹ *Measles outbreak: At least 95 cases in eight states and Mexico*; Los Angeles Times (Jan. 28, 2015).

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strategy to prevent measles.¹⁰ They have also advised caution for children under the age of 1 who are too young to be vaccinated.

We urge you to schedule a hearing on this urgent public health matter to prevent the spread of measles. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

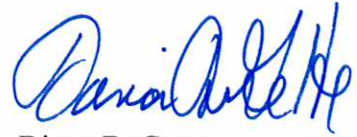
Sincerely,



Frank Pallone, Jr.
Ranking Member



Gene Green
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Health



Diana DeGette
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Oversight
and Investigations

¹⁰ *Measles Outbreak Spreads; Unvaccinated Urged To Get Vaccine*, NPR (Jan. 28, 2015).