

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
2125 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115

Majority (202) 225-3641
Minority (202) 225-2927

September 14, 2026

The Honorable Erica Schwartz
Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Rd.
Atlanta, GA 30329

Dear Director Schwartz,

We write to request an immediate briefing on the response by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to the nation's accelerating measles outbreak, including an explanation of your extraordinary decision directing CDC to suppress routine reporting of two measles-related deaths in Pennsylvania announced on August 25, 2026.¹ As Secretary Kennedy continues his campaign of meritless attacks on vaccines, the nation is facing its largest measles outbreak in 35 years.² Your decision to interfere with the inclusion of the first two measles-related deaths on CDC's publicly facing database is consistent with the many other ways that the Trump Administration has degraded tools to prevent disease spread, damaged the partnership between the states and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and suppressed information about threats and harm to the public. A third measles death announced on September 13, 2026, underscores the gravity of CDC's failure to provide consistent, reliable information to the public as the country grapples with a historic return of measles.³ The Trump Administration has abdicated its responsibility to protect Americans' health, and your continued interference with this data would make you a willing participant.

¹ *CDC Director Challenges Pennsylvania's Report of Two Measles Deaths*, New York Times (Aug. 31, 2026), *The CDC Hasn't Added 2 Deaths to its Measles Database. Here's Why*, Washington Post (Aug. 31, 2026).

² *US Measles Cases Reach 35-Year High, For Second Record-Breaking Year in a Row*, CNN (July 24, 2026); *Kennedy Defends Measles Record: 'I Have Never Been Anti-Vaccine'*, University of Minnesota Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy (Apr. 17, 2026).

³ *Pennsylvania Says an Unvaccinated Woman Has Died from Measles-Related Complications*, NPR (Sept. 13, 2026).

Pennsylvania is experiencing a record measles outbreak that, as of September 9, 2026, has infected 624 individuals and hospitalized 109.⁴ Amid this outbreak, on August 25, 2026, the state announced its first two measles-related deaths in 35 years.⁵ Neither individual was protected by vaccination.⁶ One of these deaths was a newborn who died of a ruptured spleen, which experts have stated is a potential consequence of measles-related complications.⁷

Appropriately, CDC first acknowledged these deaths on August 25, expressing its “condolences to the families and communities affected by two measles-associated deaths.”⁸ The next day, however, Secretary Kennedy claimed that the two reported deaths were “fabricated.”⁹ On Friday, August 28, CDC delayed its routine publication of national measles-related deaths on its public database.¹⁰ At that time, the public database stated that there were zero measles deaths in 2026.¹¹

 NOTICE

The data update scheduled for August 28, 2026 has been delayed. Data updates will be made as soon as possible.

(Banner from CDC Measles Cases and Outbreaks webpage on August 29, 2026)¹²

Then for a brief period on August 30, the public database’s measles death count accurately increased to two before it was quickly changed to an asterisk with a corresponding statement that the CDC was “review[ing] additional information...”¹³ Reportedly, you directed

⁴ Pennsylvania Department of Health, *Measles* (<https://www.pa.gov/agencies/health/diseases-conditions/infectious-disease/measles>) (last accessed Sept. 10, 2026).

⁵ Pennsylvania Department of Health, *Pennsylvania Department of Health Confirms Two Measles-Associated Deaths* (Aug. 25, 2026) (press release).

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *CDC Director Challenges Pennsylvania’s Report of Two Measles Deaths*, New York Times (Aug. 31, 2026); *Conflicting Information Continues in Measles-Associated Death of Pennsylvania Newborn*, University of Minnesota Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy (Aug. 31, 2026); *The Measles-Stricken Mother Who Lost Her Newborn Son*, The Atlantic (Aug. 30, 2026).

⁸ CDC (@CDCgov), X.com (Aug. 25, 2026, 4:00 PM) (<https://x.com/CDCgov/status/2092341381268115875>).

⁹ Secretary Kennedy (@SecKennedy) (Aug. 26, 2026, 5:17 PM) (<https://x.com/SecKennedy/status/2092723195228909676>).

¹⁰ CDC, *Measles Cases and Outbreaks* (Aug. 28, 2026, 9:38 PM) (available at <https://web.archive.org/web/20260828213842/https://www.cdc.gov/measles/data-research/index.html>) (last accessed Sept. 10, 2026).

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² *Id.*

¹³ *The CDC Hasn’t Added 2 Deaths to Its Measles Database. Here’s Why*, Washington Post (Aug. 31, 2026); Dr. Katelyn Jetelina (@dr_kkjetelina), X.com (Aug. 30, 2026, 5:54 PM) (https://x.com/dr_kkjetelina/status/2094179377047335030). See also CDC, *Measles Cases and Outbreaks* (Aug. 31, 2026) (available at <https://web.archive.org/web/20260831053442/https://www.cdc.gov/measles/data-research/index.html>) (last accessed Sept. 10, 2026).

this change after being told to do so by Secretary Kennedy.¹⁴ You have not provided any explanation of what “additional information” is being reviewed, who is reviewing it, and what the process is for updating the public database.

On September 4, 2026, CDC removed its prior references to the two deaths altogether, deleting its assertion that it would “exclude the two measles-associated deaths reported by the Pennsylvania Department of Health on August 25” and replacing it with the claim that it lacked “any death records from 2026 that indicate measles is the underlying cause.”¹⁵ By seemingly narrowing its reporting criteria to instances where measles is listed as the “underlying cause” on available death records, you appear to have chosen cynical wordsmithing over your obligation to transparently report public health risks to the American public.

Complicating matters further, documents reviewed by Democratic Committee staff and reporting demonstrate that CDC’s internal database still accurately reflects the two deaths in Pennsylvania as measles-associated deaths.¹⁶ This means that you have deliberately ordered CDC staff to conceal information from the public that is still available and accepted as true within CDC.

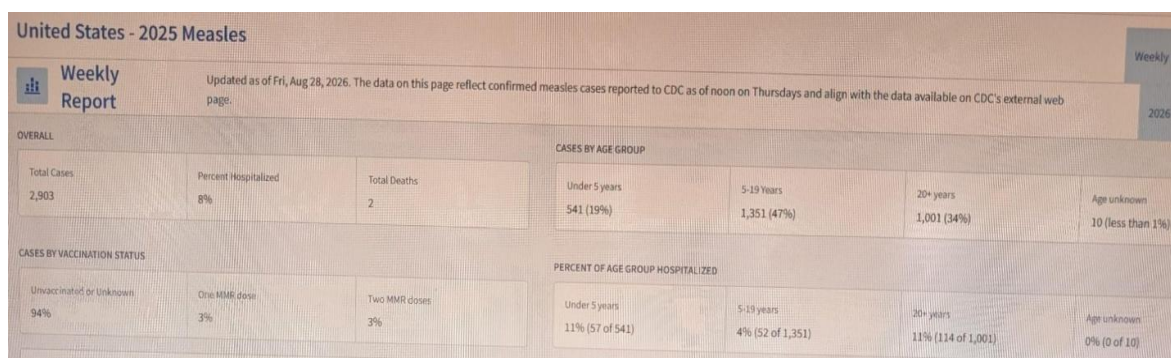


Image of internal CDC measles dashboard obtained by Democratic Committee staff reflecting two measles deaths in 2026.

Even though Pennsylvania’s Department of Health provided your agency with the relevant epidemiological data and evaluated the deaths under your agency’s scientific criteria, CDC has proceeded with its extraordinary second-guessing of the state’s judgment—a disturbing

¹⁴ Kennedy Asked to Remove Pennsylvania Measles Death from CDC Tally, Sources Say, Reuters.

¹⁵ Compare CDC, Measles Cases and Outbreaks (Sept. 4, 2026, 6:14 PM) (available at <https://web.archive.org/web/20260904181449/https://www.cdc.gov/measles/data-research/index.html>) (last accessed Sept. 10, 2026) with CDC, Measles Cases and Outbreaks (Sept. 3, 2026, 10:29 PM) (available at <https://web.archive.org/web/20260903223909/https://www.cdc.gov/measles/data-research/index.html>) (last accessed Sept. 10, 2026).

¹⁶ Scoop: CDC’s Internal System Still Counts Two Pennsylvania Measles Deaths, Inside Medicine (Sept. 3, 2026) (<https://insidemedicine.substack.com/p/scoop-cdcs-internal-system-still>).

move that continues to unravel CDC's important relationship with states.¹⁷ Your decision to depart from CDC's routine reporting practices and reject the sound determinations of state public health officials publicly minimizes the magnitude of this deadly outbreak, sacrificing science and transparency in service of the Secretary's unsupported anti-vaccine ideology. In less than one month since your confirmation by the Senate, your assurances that you will "follow the science, wherever it leads" are falling flat.¹⁸

Consistent with his long history of spouting conspiracy theories, Secretary Kennedy has now made the callous claim that Pennsylvania is "manipulating" the truth about measles-related fatalities.¹⁹ These irresponsible allegations are an attempt to deflect attention from the consequences of President Trump and Secretary Kennedy's assault on science and public health. And your mishandling of Pennsylvania's data on measles-related fatalities is an unfortunate continuation of Secretary Kennedy's deflection, obfuscation, and suppression of information.

Given your concerning actions and lack of transparency, we request a briefing on this matter for Committee Democratic staff by September 28, 2026. In addition, we request that your agency preserve all documents and communications that may be responsive to this topic, including all call records, memoranda, emails, text messages (including exchanges on Signal, WhatsApp, or similar platforms) concerning this request. Please contact Democratic Committee staff at (202) 225-2927 with any questions.

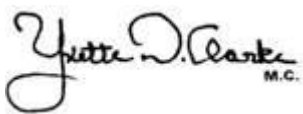
Sincerely,



Frank Pallone, Jr.
Ranking Member



Diana DeGette
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on
Health



Yvette Clarke
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on
Oversight and Investigations

¹⁷ *CDC Director Challenges Pennsylvania's Report of Two Measles Deaths*, New York Times (Aug. 31, 2026).

¹⁸ Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Finance, *Hearings to examine the nominations of Sean Kaufman, of Georgia, to be Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response, and Erica Schwartz, of Florida, to be Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, both of the Department of Health and Human Services*, 119th Cong. (Jul. 15, 2026).

¹⁹ See note 17.

The Honorable Erica Schwartz

September 14, 2026

Page 5

cc: The Honorable Brett Guthrie
Chairman

The Honorable H. Morgan Griffith
Chairman
Subcommittee on Health

The Honorable John Joyce
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations