

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 8, 2025

The Honorable Ron DeSantis
Office of the Governor
State of Florida, The Capitol
400 S. Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Governor DeSantis:

As Members of Congress, we write to share our serious concern at the recent directive issued by Florida Surgeon General Joseph Ladapo to eliminate school-based vaccine requirements. We feel it is dangerous to remove this cornerstone of public health that ensures children are protected from preventable illnesses and keeps classrooms safe for students, schools, and families alike. This basic tool against infectious disease also helps keep parents on the job, ensures businesses and clinics function optimally, and avoids costly hospitalizations. For tourists who bring young families to Florida, vaccinations offer an assurance that we are a safe travel destination. To be the first state to abandon these baseline protections needlessly endangers the lives of our children and health-compromised seniors, risks massive spikes in avoidable medical costs, and recklessly exposes Florida's tourism and overall economic health. We respectfully urge you to reconsider this policy and restore these long-standing safeguards.

The health benefits of child immunizations are indisputable. For centuries, vaccinations have been a highly effective public health measure, and in recent decades, they saved thousands of lives each year in the United States alone. They have dramatically reduced and in some cases eradicated deadly diseases such as polio, measles, rubella, tetanus, and Hepatitis B. These achievements were only possible because of widespread adherence to vaccination protocols, particularly in schools, where children spend hours in close contact. Decades of rigorous scientific study confirms that vaccines are safe, effective, and essential to prevent costly, often deadly outbreaks. Worse, weakening vaccine requirements threatens not only our children, but needlessly endangers Florida's seniors, who far more often face compromised immune systems.


We are also concerned by the inflated rhetoric around vaccine requirements, such as comparing them to "slavery." This inflammatory language risks sowing confusion among parents, and mistrust in public health institutions. Medical experts universally emphasize the importance of clear, evidence-based communication to maintain public confidence in immunization. This is especially true for families who are religiously or personally opposed to immunization: it must be made clear that current Florida law allows them to opt out. This moment requires clarity and consistency for families who depend on strong leadership to protect their children's health.

We urge you to reverse this directive and maintain school vaccine requirements. Doing so will help safeguard the health of Florida's children, families, educators, and economy, while also upholding the scientific standards that guided America's public health policies for generations.

Preserving these protections is not a partisan matter but a bipartisan responsibility to protect our most vulnerable and ensure that our schools remain safe places to learn and thrive.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. We look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress



Kathy Castor
Member of Congress



Frederica Wilson
Member of Congress



Lois Frankel
Member of Congress



Darren Soto
Member of Congress



Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick
Member of Congress



Jared Moskowitz
Member of Congress



Maxwell Frost
Member of Congress