

January 28, 2025

Dear Senators,

The undersigned 57 reproductive rights, health, and justice organizations and organizations committed to health equity are writing to share our alarming concerns regarding the nomination of Robert F. Kennedy Jr. for Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

The nomination of Kennedy for HHS Secretary represents a dangerous departure from the values of fairness, equity, and commitment to public health that should define HHS. Kennedy's record demonstrates his inability to fulfill the duties of HHS Secretary, especially in ensuring policy recommendations are based on sound scientific evidence and long-standing principles of public health. Kennedy's own actions and statements pose a direct threat to public health, which is particularly alarming at a time when junk science and misinformation are being weaponized by politicians to undermine access to critical medications, necessary medical treatments, and sexual and reproductive health care. Kennedy has a well-documented history of promoting scientifically discredited statements and discriminatory conspiracy theories, including stating that vaccines cause autism,<sup>1</sup> suggesting that chemicals in the environment could be making children gay or transgender,<sup>2</sup> and referring to puberty blockers as "castration drugs."<sup>3</sup> Given this track record, we do not have confidence in Kennedy's ability to ensure that health care policies are grounded in rigorous scientific research and evidence rather than politics and discriminatory disinformation. This could threaten the health and lives of millions throughout our nation.

Moreover, Kennedy's deeply inconsistent stance on abortion exposes his lack of fitness to lead HHS, given his failure to appreciate the gravity of the position he seeks to fill and demonstrated willingness to compromise public health for political gain.<sup>4</sup> When questioned about his position on abortion, Kennedy has offered inconsistent and vague platitudes, indicating that while he may personally support abortion, he is open to compromising on reproductive health care rights and access—critical and even lifesaving care for millions of people—for his own political gain. For instance, despite stating on the campaign trail in 2023 that he supports FDA approval of the abortion medication mifepristone,<sup>5</sup> Kennedy reportedly pledged to reimpose restrictions on mifepristone if Trump asked him to.<sup>6</sup> And during a recent meeting with Senator Hawley, Kennedy allegedly committed to "reinstate President Trump's pro-life policies at HHS."<sup>7</sup> This conduct raises serious concerns about his ability to lead with integrity while prioritizing public health. Robust, rigorous research has demonstrated the safety of abortion care and the necessity of

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<sup>1</sup> Fact-Checking RFK Jr's Views on Health Policy, BBC (Nov. 15, 2024), <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c0mzk2y41zvo>.

<sup>2</sup> Allison Novelo, RFK Jr. Says He Opposes Gender-Affirming Care, Hormone Therapy for Minors, CBS News (May 21, 2024, 5:49 PM), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/rfk-jr-opposes-gender-affirming-care-hormone-therapy-minors/>.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> Compare Where Robert F. Kennedy Stands on Abortion, Wash. Post (Nov. 8, 2023, 7:00 AM), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/interactive/2023/presidential-candidates-2024-policies-issues/robert-kennedy-jr-abortion/> (explaining that Kennedy supported a 15-week abortion ban before disavowing his previous stance and reporting that Kennedy supported access to mifepristone); with Nathaniel Weixel, Hawley: RFK Jr. Open to Mifepristone Restrictions, The Hill (Dec. 18, 2024, 5:22 PM), <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/5047469-trump-kennedy-abortion-pill-mifepristone/> (reporting that Kennedy indicated to Senator Josh Hawley that he would support efforts to restrict mifepristone access by the Trump administration).

<sup>5</sup> Where Robert F. Kennedy Stands on Abortion, *supra* note 4 (explaining that Kennedy has changed his public stance on abortion access).

<sup>6</sup> Weixel, *supra* note 4.

<sup>7</sup> Hawley Statement Following Meeting with RFK Jr., Josh Hawley: U.S. Senator for Missouri (Dec. 17, 2024), <https://www.hawley.senate.gov/hawley-statement-following-meeting-with-rfk-jr/>.

its access. The next HHS Secretary must be one who respects and follows scientific evidence, public health data, and established standards of care, irrespective of personal political motivations.

HHS agencies are responsible for funding and conducting rigorous research and communicating findings accurately to the public. We cannot afford to have a science denier at the helm of our nation's primary public health agencies, especially at a time when the United States is facing multiple public health crises, including the spread of emerging and ongoing contagious diseases, alarmingly high maternal mortality rates with deep racial inequities, and a nationwide abortion access crisis following the Supreme Court's unjust decision to overturn the constitutional right to abortion. As Secretary of HHS, Kennedy would be responsible for overseeing a broad spectrum of public health initiatives. His demonstrated lack of trust in evidence-based medicine and his seemingly politically motivated approach to policymaking casts doubt on his ability to safeguard the health and safety of all Americans.

For these reasons, we strongly urge you to consider that Kennedy's views are incompatible with the needs and values of the American people, and that his lack of commitment to reproductive rights and science-based healthcare policies would harm millions of vulnerable individuals across the country.

Signed,

AccessBetter  
Advocates for Trans Equality  
Advocates for Youth  
All\* In Action Fund  
American Atheists  
American Humanist Association  
CA LGBTQ Health and Human Services Network  
Catholics for Choice  
Center for Reproductive Rights  
COLAGE  
EMAA Project  
End Rape On Campus  
Equal Rights Advocates  
Equality California  
Guttmacher Institute  
Healthcare Across Borders  
If/When/How: Lawyering for Reproductive Justice  
Indivisible  
Institute for Women's Policy Research  
Interfaith Alliance  
Ipas  
Jacobs Institute of Women's Health  
Jewish Women International  
Justice and Joy National Collaborative  
Lambda Legal

Legal Momentum, The Women's Legal Defense and Education Fund  
Los Angeles LGBT Center  
MomsRising.org  
National Abortion Federation  
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Council of Jewish Women St. Louis  
National Council of Jewish Women-Virginia  
National Health Law Program  
National Institute for Reproductive Health  
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Justice  
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund  
National LGBTQI+ Cancer Network  
National Organization for Women  
National Partnership for Women & Families  
National Women's Law Center  
National Women's Political Caucus  
NCJW Illinois State Policy Advocate  
NCJW New Jersey  
PFLAG National  
Physicians for Reproductive Health  
Population Institute  
Power to Decide  
Religious Community for Reproductive Choice  
Reproductive Freedom for All  
SIECUS: Sex Ed for Social Change  
Silver State Equality  
Survivors Know  
The TransLatin@ Coalition  
UltraViolet Action  
URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity  
Women's March