

# RFK Jr. greets first measles death in Texas outbreak with callous indifference

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The Texas Department of State Health Services reported the first measles death in the ongoing outbreak in the south plains and panhandle regions of the state. The patient, an unvaccinated school-aged child, passed away at a hospital in Lubbock. It marks the first death from measles in the United States in 10 years.

Per the Department:

Measles is a highly contagious respiratory illness, which can cause life-threatening illness to anyone who is not protected against the virus. During a measles outbreak, about one in five people who get sick will need hospital care and one in 20 will develop pneumonia. Rarely, measles can lead to swelling of the brain and death. It can also cause pregnancy complications, such as premature birth and babies with low birth weight.

Thus far, the outbreak has officially infected 124 people in Texas, of whom 101 are under the age of 18 years. Of these, 18 patients have required hospitalization. Overall, 119 patients were either not vaccinated—including all 18 hospitalized patients and the child who died—or their vaccination status is currently unknown. There are also nine cases across the border in New Mexico.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr.—newly confirmed as the Secretary of Health and Human Services—responded to the death by saying callously, “It’s not unusual, we have measles outbreaks every year.” In his remarks, he did not express any regret or sadness for the preventable loss of a child, and he furthermore made misstatements and outlandish claims.

First, he outrageously stated that the purpose of hospitalizing patients was to quarantine them, saying: “There are about 20 people hospitalized, mainly for quarantine.” This is a flat-out and egregious lie. None of the victims was admitted to the hospital for the purpose of quarantine. Rather, they were hospitalized, without exception, due to respiratory distress.

Dr. Laura Johnson, the Chief Medical Officer of Covenant Children’s Hospital in Lubbock, noted that all the children hospitalized with measles were admitted because they were having trouble breathing.

Second, Kennedy misstated the number of deaths, saying: “There are two people who have died.” His tone in making this statement was factual and without emotion.

Kennedy instead reserved his passion for his final remarks, in which he dismissed the threat and seriousness of the situation, saying: “Incidentally, there have been four measles outbreaks this year. In this country last year there were 16. So, it’s not unusual. We have measles outbreaks every year.”

Kennedy stopped short of taking credit for measles outbreaks, which would have been entirely appropriate given his past work as president of the anti-vaccine agency Children’s Health Defense (CHD). Under his watch, CHD promulgated vaccine misinformation and launched several failed lawsuits against vaccines and vaccination campaigns.

Just last week, in his first speech to employees at HHS, Kennedy reaffirmed that he intends to undermine the childhood vaccine schedule, which he listed first among “formerly taboo” possible causes of chronic disease. Making clear that he will embark upon an anti-vaccine and anti-public health wrecking operation, he added, “Nothing is going to be off limits.”

In 2019, Kennedy also notoriously traveled to Samoa

to meet with anti-vaccine advocates, lending credibility to their efforts that resulted in substantial vaccine hesitancy on the island. Not long after his visit, measles ripped through the island's population, infecting more than 5,700 out of approximately 200,000. There were 83 deaths, the majority of whom were young children.

Kennedy's expression of indifference to the measles death in Texas comes as multiple infectious disease threats grow across the country. Seasonal influenza continues to surge, with 44 states reporting high or very high transmission levels per the latest data from the CDC.

Two patients are currently hospitalized with H5N1 "bird flu" in the US, one each in Wyoming and Ohio. At the same time, the US remains mired in its 10th wave of mass COVID infection, with approximately 600,000 people catching the virus each day.

While these diseases spread unchecked, the fascist billionaire Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) continues to lay off or fire many government employees who have been attempting to control the spread of bird flu. The US Department of Agriculture said it "accidentally fired several" employees working to control H5N1.

DOGE actions also led to the dismissal of employees at the CDC's Laboratory Leadership Service, informally known as "the disease detectors." Also cut were the CDC's Public Health Associate Program, which supplies personnel with critical expertise to short-staffed state health departments, and its Presidential Management Fellows, which trains future public health leaders.

All told to date, DOGE has eliminated approximately 5,200 positions at HHS agencies, including roughly 10 percent of the workforce at both the CDC and National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Trump's nominee to head NIH, Dr. Jay Bhattacharya, could have a hearing in the Senate as early as next week. Dr. Marty Makary, nominated to head the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), could have a hearing in early March. The remainder of the public health nominees at present do not appear to have imminent hearings, including Dr. Dave Weldon, nominated for CDC Director.

Bhattacharya is infamous for co-authoring the Great Barrington Declaration, which promulgated the anti-scientific "herd immunity" policy. Despite objecting at

the time, Democrats under former President Joe Biden's administration subsequently implemented that policy in full.

Kennedy's quack anti-science dealings extend to removing fluoride from public drinking water systems. That has led to the state of Utah becoming first in the nation to pass legislation to remove fluoride from its drinking water. The bill now awaits Governor Spencer Cox's signature.

In Florida, Republican Senator Keith Truenow has filed senate bill (SB) 700, which would prohibit local governments from adding fluoride to drinking water.

The broad assault on public health, with Kennedy as its leading voice and champion, is a major component of the Trump administration's brutal attack on the working class and its plans for clawing back all the gains won by workers in the 20th century. Kennedy's callous response to the death of a school-aged, unvaccinated child from measles—a death that was entirely preventable and for which Kennedy bears much responsibility—is the personification of this coming onslaught.

The ruling class intends to commit monstrous social crimes by fostering the spread of deadly infectious diseases throughout the population. The working class cannot fight back through the Democratic Party or its ancillaries like the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), as these entities have already proven complicit in these plans. Instead, it must organize independently, on the basis of its own political program, fighting to overturn the capitalist system that depends on such barbarism for its survival.



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