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July 15, 2025

The Honorable Ron Johnson

Chair

Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations

Homeland Security and Government Affairs

Committee

Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Blumenthal

Ranking Member

Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations

Homeland Security and Government Affairs

Committee

Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Johnson and Ranking Member Blumenthal:

On behalf of the Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA), a community of 13,000-plus infectious diseases (ID) clinicians, scientists and public health experts working together to solve humanity's smallest and greatest challenges, I am writing today in response to the upcoming hearing "Voices of the Vaccine Injured" to strongly emphasize the importance of access to all vaccinations. Many people may understandably have questions about vaccines, and it is important that they have access to scientifically-sound evidence-based information to be able to make the best decisions for themselves and their families. Federal officials have a responsibility to help share the highest quality scientific information with the public.

Vaccines are a science-based, physician-recommended tool for keeping people of all ages safe, including infants, the elderly and people with chronic illnesses who are at higher risk for severe infections from vaccine-preventable viruses and bacteria than the general public and who may be less protected from vaccination. High vaccination rates in the general population help stop the spread of potentially serious and severe vaccine-preventable diseases. When vaccination rates drop in a community, the risk of an outbreak is increased significantly.ⁱ A 2019 study found that the most common childhood vaccines prevented more than 24 million illnesses.ⁱⁱ

Vaccines are backed by multiple decades of scientific data demonstrating their overwhelming safety and efficacy and are some of the most rigorously tested and monitored public health interventions.ⁱⁱⁱ Systems for reporting adverse events and unanticipated side effects have successfully detected rare but important side effects not seen in the primary trials of vaccines.^{iv}

Vaccine-preventable diseases can be extremely serious and severe. For example, measles can cause serious complications, including pneumonia, deafness and encephalitis, especially in young children. Already this year, measles cases in the U.S. have reached the highest level since 2000 when the disease was declared eliminated in this nation.^v Every year, more than 50,000 adults die needlessly and thousands of adults suffer serious health problems and complications from vaccine-preventable diseases including influenza, RSV, pneumococcal disease and shingles.^{vi} Some vaccines prevent cancer, notably the HPV vaccine, which prevents cervical cancer, and the hepatitis B vaccine, which prevents liver cancer.^{vii}

Vaccines are an important and essential component of homeland security and pandemic preparedness. For example, in an influenza pandemic, the health care and public health systems would need to rapidly ramp up vaccination clinics to combat a rapidly spreading virus that could otherwise have the potential to cause high levels of hospitalizations, mortality and significant economic disruptions. Reduced confidence in vaccines would make it extremely difficult and significantly harder to protect the public in a pandemic scenario.

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I hope your committee will help promote vaccine confidence and ensure vaccine access. IDSA stands ready to provide any additional information on these important topics. For further information please contact Amanda Jezek, IDSA senior vice president of public policy and government relations at ajezek@idsociety.org

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tina Q. Tan MD". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the letters "Tina" and "Tan" being more prominent than the middle initials "Q.". The "MD" is written in a slightly different, more upright script.

Tina Tan, MD, FIDSA, FPIDS, FAAP
President, IDSA

References

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- ^{iv} Shimabukuro TT, Nguyen M, Martin D, DeStefano F. Safety monitoring in the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS). *Vaccine*. 2015 Aug 26;33(36):4398-405. doi: 10.1016/j.vaccine.2015.07.035. Epub 2015 Jul 22. PMID: 26209838; PMCID: PMC4632204.
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- ^{vi} Adult Vaccine Access Coalition. Accessed January 15, 2025 from <https://adultvaccinesnow.org/>.
- ^{vii} American Cancer Society, Cancer Vaccines and Their Side Effects. Accessed February 6, 2025 from <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/treatment-types/immunotherapy/cancer-vaccines.html>.

