

ONE HUNDRED SIXTEENTH CONGRESS  
**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

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August 26, 2019

Robert R. Redfield, M.D.  
Director  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
1600 Clifton Road  
Atlanta, GA 30329-4027

Jerome M. Adams, M.D.  
Surgeon General of the United States  
Office of the Surgeon General  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20201

Robert Kadlec, M.D.  
Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Director Redfield, Surgeon General Adams, and Assistant Secretary Kadlec:

I am writing with deep concerns about recent reports that U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is not currently providing, nor has plans to provide ahead of the upcoming flu season, the traditional influenza vaccine to migrant children, adults, and families in CBP custody.<sup>1</sup> Given your preeminent public health leadership at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and as the U.S. Surgeon General, and as the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR), I am writing to you because CBP's decision to forgo vaccinating detained individuals does not best serve the nation's public health interest and goals.

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<sup>1</sup> *The US Won't Provide Flu Vaccines to Migrant Families at Border Detention Camps*, CNBC, Aug. 20, 2019 ([www.cnbc.com/2019/08/20/the-us-wont-vaccinate-migrant-children-against-the-flu-at-border-camps.html](http://www.cnbc.com/2019/08/20/the-us-wont-vaccinate-migrant-children-against-the-flu-at-border-camps.html)).

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According to CDC, everyone six months of age and older should receive a flu vaccine every season.<sup>2</sup> CDC's website notes that "this recommendation has been in place since February 24, 2010, when CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) voted for 'universal' flu vaccination in the United States in order to expand protection against the flu to more people."<sup>3</sup> CDC has also emphasized that flu vaccinations are particularly important for those at high risk of serious complications from the flu, such as young children and adults who are close contacts of those children.<sup>4</sup>

Complications from the flu can lead to other serious health implications, as well as hospitalization and death, and these potential dangers are only heightened for young children. That is why it is especially concerning that CBP is failing to provide available flu vaccinations, even in light of public reports that at least three children have died in recent months as a result of complications from the flu after entering the United States.<sup>5</sup> This is unconscionable and can be prevented.

As Surgeon General Adams noted in February 2018, "It's heartbreaking that there are still preventable deaths from flu every year."<sup>6</sup>

Given the recent announcement that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) will seek to hold migrant families in federal custody for indefinite periods of time,<sup>7</sup> which I oppose, combined with CBP's intention to not provide flu vaccinations to those detained, I hope you share in my alarm that this is not a prudent public health strategy for preventing influenza.

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<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Flu Vaccination ([www.cdc.gov/flu/prevent/keyfacts.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/prevent/keyfacts.htm)).

<sup>3</sup> Id.

<sup>4</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Influenza (Flu) ([www.cdc.gov/flu/highrisk/index.htm?CDC\\_AA\\_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fflu%2Fabout%2Fdisease%2Fhigh\\_risk.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/highrisk/index.htm?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fflu%2Fabout%2Fdisease%2Fhigh_risk.htm)).

<sup>5</sup> *The US Won't Provide Flu Vaccines to Migrant Families at Border Detention Camps*, CNBC, Aug. 20, 2019 ([www.cnbc.com/2019/08/20/the-us-wont-vaccinate-migrant-children-against-the-flu-at-border-camps.html](http://www.cnbc.com/2019/08/20/the-us-wont-vaccinate-migrant-children-against-the-flu-at-border-camps.html)).

<sup>6</sup> Department of Health and Human Services, Statement from the U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Jerome M. Adams on the Flu ([www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/about/news/us-surgeon-general-jerome-adams-statement-on-the-flu/index.html](http://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/about/news/us-surgeon-general-jerome-adams-statement-on-the-flu/index.html)).

<sup>7</sup> Department of Homeland Security, DHS and HHS Announce New Rule to Implement the Flores Settlement Agreement ([www.dhs.gov/news/2019/08/21/dhs-and-hhs-announce-new-rule-implement-flores-settlement-agreement](http://www.dhs.gov/news/2019/08/21/dhs-and-hhs-announce-new-rule-implement-flores-settlement-agreement)).

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As the nation's voices for the protection of public health, it is your duty to speak out against this misguided decision. I am calling on you to implore CBP to provide influenza vaccinations to all detained individuals, but most especially young children, in order to best protect them from influenza and prevent unnecessary illnesses, hospitalizations, or additional deaths ahead of this upcoming flu season.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Frank Pallone, Jr." with a stylized flourish at the end.

Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Chairman