



TO: Joseph A. Ladapo, MD, PhD, State Surgeon General of Florida

FROM: American Osteopathic Association
American College of Osteopathic Pediatricians

DATE: September 9, 2025

SUBJECT: Opposition to Ending Childhood Vaccine Mandates in Florida

The American Osteopathic Association (AOA) and the American College of Osteopathic Pediatricians (ACOP) write today to express our deep concerns regarding the announcement that Florida will end all vaccine mandates, including those required for students to attend schools¹. This troubling announcement comes at a time when U.S. measles cases are at a 33-year record high^{2,3}, and its timing also coincides with the beginning of the critical flu and respiratory illness season. The AOA and the ACOP believe that as scientific and medical professionals, we have a duty to protect the public health by supporting access to vaccines and encouraging their use, rather than undermining public confidence in evidence-based medicine and contributing to an increase in vaccine-preventable diseases and deaths.

The AOA is a professional organization representing more than 197,000 osteopathic physicians (DOs) and osteopathic medical students nationwide. The AOA promotes public health, encourages scientific research, and serves as the primary certifying body for DOs. The ACOP is a medical specialty organization representing over 2,250 osteopathic pediatricians – including those in training – nationwide. DOs represent nearly 1 in 5 U.S. physicians and 1 in 4 medical students, practicing in every medical specialty⁴. We are trusted sources of information in our communities, working in partnership with our patients to improve health, promote wellness, and enhance prevention. We also actively work to dispel harmful dis- and misinformation about vaccines.

All vaccines recommended in the U.S. – through organizations such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention⁵ and the American Academy of Pediatrics⁶ – are thoroughly vetted through rigorous testing, extensive clinical trials, and global efforts to measure their success rates and safety. There is a robust body of evidence supporting vaccine efficacy and its ability to prevent not only virus spread, but also patient hospitalizations and deaths. A prime example of vaccine success is the eradication of measles in the US in 2000, as declared by the World Health Organization, due to our 95% vaccination rate and resulting “herd immunity,” which protects those who are ineligible for vaccination due to their age or medical status.⁷ Vaccines are one of the best tools for protecting public health—and as physicians, we are some of the most trusted voices to recommend them.

¹ <https://amp.miamiherald.com/news/politics-government/state-politics/article311956239.html>

² <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/ivac/2025/us-measles-cases-hit-highest-level-since-declared-eliminated-in-2000>

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/measles/data-research/index.html>

⁴ <https://osteopathic.org/index.php?aam-media=/wp-content/uploads/2024-OMP-Report.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/imz-schedules/downloads/child/0-18yrs-child-combined-schedule.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/immunizations/vaccination-recommendations-by-the-aap/?srsltid=AfmBOoqsJlbNSjGSxrv0ONSjBpYcUyIXbf-3h1f8UXnOIIAVmEm8yW1u>

⁷ <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/72/wr/mm7246a3.htm>

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On the heels of a global pandemic which led to more than 7 million deaths worldwide⁸, and in anticipation of a harsh respiratory virus season this year, it is crucial that we increase vaccine confidence and vaccination rates. Our overburdened healthcare system already has little-to-no capacity for absorbing additional patients, whether it be in our emergency departments, or our outpatient, inpatient, or intensive care units. We cannot afford to add preventable stress to our healthcare system. Should this trend of imposing restrictions and discouraging vaccinations continue, however, we will be doing precisely that. We have already seen what happens when confidence in vaccines falls and vaccination rates drop: it is our patients who suffer, usually through the increased spread of disease, serious health complications, hospitalizations, and sometimes death.

Now, more than ever, we need to make decisions based on the guidance of qualified experts in these fields and the best available evidence. We urge Florida's public leaders to course-correct to protect the health of its citizens, as well as the state's public health infrastructure. Should you have any questions or require additional information, please feel free to contact Raine Richards, JD, AOA Vice President of State and International Affairs, at rrichards@osteopathic.org.

Sincerely,



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President, AOA



Tyree M.S. Winters, DO, FACOP, FAAP
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⁸ <https://data.who.int/dashboards/covid19/deaths>