

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

SELECT SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS

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<https://coronavirus.house.gov>

June 17, 2022

The Honorable Ron DeSantis
Governor
The Capitol of the State of Florida
400 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dear Governor DeSantis:

As coronavirus vaccines have enabled hundreds of millions of Americans to protect themselves against this deadly virus over the past 18 months, millions of parents have been waiting for the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to authorize a vaccine for children under five. With today's Emergency Use Authorization of two vaccines for this age group by FDA, the end of this wait appears imminent. The Biden Administration has already laid the groundwork for the distribution and administration of doses to ensure that parents who choose to vaccinate their children can do so as soon as possible. A key element of this plan is the cooperation of state governments in ordering vaccines for distribution to medical providers in their states. Orders have been placed by 49 states—every state but Florida.¹ As a result of your refusal to participate, Florida parents who wish to vaccinate their children may be forced to wait even longer, and their children could be left without the protection these vaccines provide. I am writing to request the reversal of or an explanation for this seemingly inexplicable decision.

Your public justifications have heightened my concern. You declared that you are “affirmatively against the Covid vaccine for young kids” because, in your view, they “have zero risk of getting anything.”² Yet although the coronavirus poses less risk to young children than to older Americans, the risks are significantly above zero. To date, over 2,600 American children under five have been hospitalized with the coronavirus, and 442 have died from the disease.³

¹ *Every State but Florida Pre-Ordered COVID-19 Vaccines for Kids Under 5*, McClatchy DC (June 25, 2022) (online at www.mcclatchydc.com/news/politics-government/white-house/article262537502.html).

² *DeSantis Says Florida Is 'Affirmatively Against' Covid-19 Vaccines for Young Kids*, Politico (June 16, 2022) (online at www.politico.com/news/2022/06/16/desantis-covid-vaccine-florida-kids-fda-00040191).

³ Kristin J. Marks, et al., *Hospitalization of Infants and Children Aged 0–4 Years with Laboratory-Confirmed COVID-19 — COVID-NET, 14 States, March 2020–February 2022*, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (Mar. 18, 2022) (online at www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/mm7111e2.htm); Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Provisional COVID-19 Deaths: Focus on Ages 0-18 Years* (June 2, 2022) (online at <https://data.cdc.gov/NCHS/Provisional-COVID-19-Deaths-Focus-on-Ages-0-18-Yea/nr4s-juj3>).

Even mild coronavirus infections can cause serious long-term effects for children, such as multisystem inflammatory syndrome—a rare but potentially deadly inflammatory disorder—and long COVID, which can cause severe fatigue, cognitive difficulties, muscle and joint pain, and other symptoms that persist for months.⁴ The two vaccines authorized by FDA have been shown to be extremely safe and highly effective against the coronavirus in clinical trials.⁵

Yet because of your deliberate inaction, pediatricians and family doctors across Florida are currently unable to order doses for their youngest patients—meaning that they will not be able to administer the shots to this newly eligible age group.⁶ Although federal vaccination sites such as federal pharmacy partners and some federally qualified health centers can order vaccines directly from the federal government, these sites may be inaccessible to many families and may exclude children under three from being vaccinated.⁷ Your decision to reject these vaccines could deny Florida parents the ability to make their own decisions on what is best for the health of their children—and could deny some Florida children the ability to live long and healthy lives.

It is not too late to reverse course and order vaccines for Florida children under five. If you continue to believe that your current policy of being “affirmatively against the Covid vaccine for young kids”—and limiting parents’ ability to make a different choice—is in children’s best interests, I request a staff briefing by June 30, 2022, regarding your rationale.

This request is consistent with the House of Representatives’ authorization of the Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis “to conduct a full and complete investigation” of “issues related to the coronavirus crisis,” including “preparedness for and response to the coronavirus crisis” and “the development of vaccines and treatments.”⁸

⁴ See, e.g., Petra Zimmermann, et al., *How Common Is Long COVID in Children and Adolescents?*, *The Pediatric Infectious Disease Journal* (Dec. 2021) (online at https://journals.lww.com/pidj/fulltext/2021/12000/how_common_is_long_covid_in_children_and.20.aspx); Thomas Radtke, et al., *Long-term Symptoms After SARS-CoV-2 Infection in Children and Adolescents*, *JAMA* (July 15, 2021) (online at <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2782164>); *Researchers Are Studying Long COVID in Kids – Here’s What They Know So Far*, ABC News (June 16, 2022) (online at <https://abcnews.go.com/Health/researchers-studying-long-covid-kids/story?id=85434559>).

⁵ Food and Drug Administration, *Press Release: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update: FDA Authorizes Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccines for Children Down to 6 Months of Age* (June 17, 2022) (online at www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/coronavirus-covid-19-update-fda-authorizes-moderna-and-pfizer-biontech-covid-19-vaccines-children); *FDA Advisers Vote in Favor of Authorizing Covid-19 Vaccines for Children as Young as 6 Months*, CNN (June 15, 2022) (online at www.cnn.com/2022/06/15/health/fda-covid-vaccine-youngest-children-vrbpac-vote/index.html).

⁶ *Florida’s Decision Not to Preorder Vaccines for Young Children Will Create Access Issues: White House*, ABC News (June 16, 2022) (online at <https://abcnews.go.com/Health/floridas-decision-preorder-vaccines-young-children-create-access/story?id=85441916>).

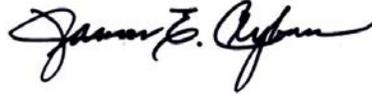
⁷ *Id.*; *DeSantis Defends State Decision Not to Order COVID Vaccines for Young Kids*, *Miami Herald* (June 16, 2022) (online at www.miamiherald.com/news/coronavirus/article262575177.html).

⁸ H.Res. 8, sec. 4(f); H.Res. 935, 116th Cong. (2020).

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Please confirm by June 24, 2022, that you have received my letter and will comply with this request. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Select Subcommittee staff at (202) 225-4400.

Sincerely,



James E. Clyburn
Chairman

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Steve Scalise, Ranking Member