

*The following was delivered by Alliance for Aging Research Director of Health Programs Katrin Werner-Perez during the public comment portion of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) [Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices \(ACIP\) June 25-26 meeting](#):*

Good morning. My name is Katrin Werner-Perez, and I serve as the Director of Health Programs at the Alliance for Aging Research. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments. The Alliance has five recommendations for you today:

First, we urge ACIP to vote on COVID-19 vaccine recommendations, as was stated in the Federal Register notice for this meeting. COVID-19 continues to pose a significant risk of severe illness, hospitalization, and death across the lifespan. Between the fall of 2023 and 2024, the CDC reported more than 36,000 deaths among adults 65 and older, and 152 deaths in children — the equivalent of nearly 100 older adults dying each day, and one child dying every two and a half days.

The HHS Secretary's preemptive removal of COVID-19 vaccines from the recommended schedule for healthy pregnant people and children undermines ACIP's 50-year role of providing expert perspectives and advice on the use of vaccines in the U.S. population. This decision also contradicts the FDA's newly published framework, which recognizes pregnancy as a high-risk condition. Because of this change, the American Pharmacists Association withheld its endorsement of the current schedule.

Second, we strongly urge the CDC to finalize ACIP's April vote on RSV vaccine, which would lower the age for risk-based recommendations to include adults aged 50 to 59. RSV causes 42,000 hospitalizations annually in adults 50 to 64, and over 13 million adults in this age group have conditions that increase their risk of severe RSV. This change would save lives and reduce healthcare costs.

Third, please reinstate the vote on influenza vaccines for this year's strain that was promised at the April meeting, otherwise CMS and insurers won't cover them.

Fourth, while we are grateful to see the approved vote on RSV for the Vaccines for Children program, we ask that ACIP restore all originally planned votes, including for COVID-19, HPV, and influenza. Without these votes, there's no guarantee of free vaccines for children who need them this fall.

Finally, we strongly oppose the vote on thimerosal-containing influenza vaccines. The FDA has long confirmed thimerosal's safety record. Thimerosal is only used as a preservative in multi-dose adult flu vaccines to prevent bacterial and fungal growth. Removing it would disproportionately harm resource-constrained settings, like nursing homes and long-term

care facilities, that serve older adults and rely on MDVs. More broadly, this discussion will unnecessarily sow doubt on vaccines.

While the Alliance opposed the Secretary's decision to fire all 17 previous ACIP members, we now look to you to fulfill this critical responsibility. We urge you to prioritize scientific integrity and impartiality as ACIP has done for 50 years. The health of the American people is in your hands.

Thank you.