



February 18, 2025

An Open Letter to the People of Louisiana:

As President of the Louisiana Academy of Family Physicians, I am writing to reaffirm our unwavering support for vaccinations and evidence-based public health measures. Our stance is grounded in decades of scientific research and real-world evidence demonstrating the safety and efficacy of vaccines in preventing serious diseases.

The recent measles outbreak in western Texas, with 48 confirmed cases as of Friday, February 14, 2025, serves as a stark reminder of what happens when vaccination rates decline. This outbreak, which has primarily affected unvaccinated individuals, could have been entirely prevented through routine MMR vaccination. This is not merely a hypothetical scenario – it is a present-day public health challenge in our region.

What many may not realize is that modern medical education has changed dramatically due to the success of vaccines. Today's physicians rarely encounter diseases like measles, mumps, rubella, or chickenpox during their training. While this speaks to the tremendous success of vaccination programs, it also means that an entire generation of doctors has never treated these potentially devastating illnesses. We must not allow this success to breed complacency.

The physician-patient relationship is sacred, and we deeply respect patient autonomy. However, we must acknowledge that vaccination decisions extend beyond individual choice. When we choose to vaccinate, we not only protect ourselves but also:

- Immunocompromised individuals who cannot receive vaccines
- Infants too young to be vaccinated
- Elderly patients with weakened immune systems
- Patients undergoing cancer treatment
- Those with chronic conditions that make them more vulnerable to infection

We must prevent the politicization of public health measures that have saved countless lives. Vaccines are not a matter of political ideology but of scientific evidence and community responsibility. The doctor-patient relationship should remain focused on health outcomes and evidence-based medicine, not political discourse.

As family physicians, we are committed to having thoughtful, respectful discussions about vaccines with our patients. We understand concerns and questions, and we welcome these conversations. However, we must be clear: vaccines remain one of the most effective public health interventions in human history. In the past, the LAFP has partnered with LDH and we look forward to working with them in the future.

Our commitment to public health compels us to advocate for strong vaccination policies while maintaining respect for the doctor-patient relationship. We urge all Louisianians to consult with their family physicians about staying up-to-date on recommended vaccinations.

Together, we can protect our communities and ensure that preventable diseases remain a part of medical history rather than our children's future.

Sincerely,

Vincent Shaw, MD, CAQSM, FAAFP  
President  
Louisiana Academy of Family Physicians