

United States Senate

December 3, 2021

The Honorable Xavier Becerra
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Becerra,


I write to express my serious concerns regarding an interim final rule published in the Federal Register by the Office of Head Start (OHS) on November 30th and ask for its rescission. While I believe the COVID-19 vaccine is key to getting life back to normal and ending the pandemic, I oppose mandating it and am concerned this rule will have unintended consequences to the detriment of Montana Head Start employees and children served by the program.

As you know, the rule requires universal masking for those two years and older attending Head Start and mandates all staffers, contractors working directly with children, and volunteers be vaccinated against the coronavirus by January 31, 2022. More than 3,000 children attend Head Start in the state of Montana. Now, this vaccine mandate threatens to disrupt this service for Montana families and communities.

I have heard that Head Start employees and volunteers in Montana face imminent termination if they do not receive a COVID-19 vaccine. These employees and volunteers do not deserve this threat nor do the families and children who benefit from the program deserve the uncertainty this mandate will cause.

While I will continue to encourage individuals to consult with their doctor about getting a COVID-19 vaccine, I have faith in Montanans to practice commonsense and personal responsibility as they have throughout the pandemic. The government mandated vaccine targeting Head Start employees and volunteers will hurt Montana's most disadvantaged families and children. Therefore, I ask that it be rescinded immediately.

Sincerely,



STEVE DAINES
United States Senator