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AMCNO Denounces Nomination of RFK Jr. for Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS)

CLEVELAND, OH – Ahead of tomorrow’s Senate confirmation hearings, the Academy of Medicine of Cleveland & Northern Ohio (AMCNO), a 200-year-old leading organization in physician advocacy, representing over 7,500 physicians, is again denouncing the decision by the incoming Trump Administration to nominate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. to lead the Department of Health and Human Services. Mr. Kennedy is a well-known anti-vaccine and anti-science advocate and has touted conspiracy theories and lies about vaccines (including that childhood immunizations cause autism), the pasteurization of milk, and fluoride in water.

There is no question that vaccines are the greatest public health invention of our time. They have allowed us to diminish and, in some cases, eradicate the threat of fatal infectious diseases. There is also no question that routine childhood immunizations have helped save lives.

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that vaccines annually prevent almost 6 million deaths worldwide. And in the United States there has been a 99% decrease in incidence for the nine diseases for which childhood vaccines have been recommended for decades.

“Vaccines not only protect the immunized but can also reduce disease among unimmunized individuals in the community through ‘indirect effects’ or ‘herd protection.’ In the last 50 years alone, vaccines have helped to nearly wipe out measles, diphtheria, and polio. Mr. Kennedy’s known opposition to routine childhood vaccinations is a threat to the public’s health and opens the door for these illnesses to recur in our children,” said Kristin Englund, MD, an infectious disease physician and president of the Academy of Medicine’s Education Foundation.

Mr. Kennedy also said i that he would remove FDA barriers to consuming raw milk. In 1917, after a study of the milk supply, AMCNO physicians pushed the pasteurization of milk, after 3,000 children in Cleveland under 2 died. Twenty years later, the deaths related to milk declined to 100 and a milestone in infant mortality was accomplished. “It is alarming that more than 100 years after employing the pasteurization of milk we are questioning the lives saved since that public health intervention,” added Englund.

“The Academy is proud of our 200-year history in protecting the public health in Cleveland & Northern Ohio and we stand strongly against the appointment of a man with no medical education or experience to lead the Department of Health and Human Services. Anyone who argues against fundamental tenets

of medical science without using any empirical evidence is not well-suited to that position,” said AMCNO President and family medicine physician, Marie Schaefer, MD.

AMCNO strongly urges Ohio’s Senators to stop the appointment of Mr. Kennedy in the name of public health. We believe the United States Senate should be given the time necessary to vet this nomination and use their powers of "advise and consent" to review his dangerous record on public health.

ABOUT AMCNO

The Academy of Medicine of Cleveland & Northern Ohio (AMCNO) is a nonprofit 501(c)6 professional organization with the mission of supporting physicians in being strong advocates for all patients and promoting the practice of the highest quality of medicine. Founded in 1824, AMCNO has a long history of physician advocacy as the oldest professional organization in Ohio.