

July 30, 2025

U.S. Senator Ron Johnson
Chair, Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations
Committee on Homeland Security & Government Affairs
United States Senate
328 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Johnson,

I am writing on behalf of the [Gerontological Society of America \(GSA\)](http://www.geron.org) regarding the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations' hearing titled Voices of the Vaccine Injured. We ask that this letter be included in the hearing record.

On behalf of GSA, we appreciate the opportunity to discuss vaccine-preventable diseases, which affect all of us across the life course.

GSA is the nation's oldest and largest interdisciplinary organization devoted to research, education, and practice in the field of aging. The principal mission of the Society—and its 6,000+ members—is to advance the study of aging and disseminate information among scientists, decision-makers, and the public. We cultivate excellence in interdisciplinary aging research and education to advance innovations in practice and policy, and we routinely convene stakeholders to discuss issues of importance and make recommendations to address the specific needs of older people.

Our nation has reaped the longevity dividends of vaccines. In addition to clean drinking water and sanitation, safe and efficacious vaccination has protected us from diseases that cause substantial morbidity and mortality (Rodrigues, 2020). In recent years, we have become accustomed to what has enabled us to live longer, healthier lives. Polio, smallpox, and until recently measles have slipped from public memory. We have also become accustomed to vaccinations against diseases that drive up mortality for older people (Crooke, 2019). We now have effective vaccines that prevent pneumonia and help older people's immune systems fight against bacterial infections that are a leading cause of death. We also have effective vaccines against shingles, an excruciating infection which most commonly affects older people (Baxter, 2018). The research and results are clear – vaccination is not just a tool to support childhood or adolescent health, but to support all of us as we age.

Furthermore, we aim to change the dialogue about vaccines from their narrow focus on individual health benefits – offering protection against a single target condition – to their broad, far-reaching value to both individuals and society. Through our initiative "[Concentric Value of Vaccination as We Age](#)," we seek to

illuminate individual health benefits (e.g., increased life expectancy, prevention of exacerbation of preexisting conditions), societal health benefits (e.g., prevention of antibiotic resistance), and individual and societal economic benefits.

We thank the Subcommittee for discussing vaccine safety and support calls for continued federal oversight and scientific research into the safety of vaccines and all biomedical products (Knipe, 2020). Further, we strongly encourage all Senators to consider their role in promoting the public's health and longevity. We encourage the Subcommittee to consider the role of vaccination for medically vulnerable and immunocompromised people, which will include all of us as we age.

For additional information, please contact Patricia D'Antonio, Vice President of Policy and Professional Affairs, at pdantonio@geron.org, or Jordan Miles, Director of Policy at jmiles@geron.org

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "James C. Appleby". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

James C. Appleby, BSPHarm, MPH, ScD (Hon)
Chief Executive Officer

References:

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Crooke, S.N., Ovsyannikova, I.G., Poland, G.A. and Kennedy, R.B., 2019. Immunosenescence and human vaccine immune responses. *Immunity & ageing*, 16(1), p.25.

Rodrigues, F.M., Marlow, R., Simões, M.J., Danon, L., Ladhani, S. and Finn, A., 2020. Association of use of a meningococcus group B vaccine with group B invasive meningococcal disease among children in Portugal. *Jama*, 324(21), pp.2187-2194.