

# CAROLINE KENNEDY

January 28, 2025

Senator Mike Crapo  
Senate Committee on Finance

Senator Ron Wyden  
Senate Committee on Finance

Senator Bill Cassidy  
Senate Committee on  
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions

Senator Bernie Sanders  
Senate Committee on  
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions

Dear Senators Crapo, Wyden, Cassidy and Sanders:

Throughout the past year, people have asked for my thoughts about my cousin, Robert Kennedy, Jr. and his presidential campaign.

I did not comment, not only because I was serving in a government position as United States Ambassador to Australia, but because I have never wanted to speak publicly about my family members and their challenges. We are a close generation of 28 cousins who have been through a lot together. We know how hard it has been, and we are always there for each other.

But now that Bobby has been nominated by President Trump to be Secretary of Health and Human Services, a position that would put him in charge of the health of the American people, I feel an obligation to speak out.

Overseeing the FDA, the NIH, the CDC, and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services – agencies that are charged with protecting the most vulnerable among us – is an enormous responsibility, and one that Bobby is unqualified to fill. He lacks any relevant government, financial, management, or medical experience. His views on vaccines are dangerous and willfully misinformed. These facts alone should be disqualifying. But he has personal qualities related to this position which, for me, pose even greater concern.

I have known Bobby my whole life; we grew up together. It's no surprise that he keeps birds of prey as pets because he himself is a predator. He has always been charismatic – able to attract others through the strength of his personality, willingness to take risks and break the rules. I watched his younger brothers and cousins follow him down the path of drug addiction. His basement, his garage, and his dorm room were the centers of the action where drugs were available, and he enjoyed showing off how he put baby chickens and mice in the blender to feed his hawks. It was often a perverse scene of despair and violence.

Of course, people can grow and change. Through his own strength – and the many second chances he was given by people who felt sorry for the boy who had lost his father – Bobby was able to pull himself out of illness and disease. I admire the discipline that took and the continuing commitment it requires.

But siblings and cousins who Bobby encouraged down the path of substance abuse suffered addiction, illness, and death while Bobby has gone on to misrepresent, lie, and cheat his way through life. Today, while he may encourage a younger generation to attend AA meetings, Bobby is addicted to attention and power. Bobby preys on the desperation of parents of sick children – vaccinating his own children while building a following by hypocritically discouraging other parents from vaccinating theirs. Even before he fills this job, his constant denigration of our health care system and the conspiratorial half-truths he has told about vaccines, including in connection with Samoa's deadly 2019 measles outbreak, have cost lives.

And now we know that Bobby's crusade against vaccination has benefited him in other ways, too. His ethics report makes clear that he will keep his financial stake in a lawsuit against an HPV vaccine. In other words, he is willing to enrich himself by denying access to a vaccine that can prevent almost all forms of cervical cancer and which has been safely administered to millions of boys and girls. During my time in Australia working on the QUAD Cancer Moonshot, I learned that cervical cancer is among the top three forms of cancer among women in a majority of countries. Tragically every year, more than 200,000 children lose their mothers, orphaned due to lack of vaccines and screening. Those are the real-world consequences of Bobby's irresponsible beliefs.

We are a close family and none of this is easy to say. It also wasn't easy to remain silent last year when Bobby expropriated my father's image and distorted President Kennedy's legacy to advance his own failed presidential campaign – and then groveled to Donald Trump for a job. Bobby continues to grandstand off my father's assassination, and that of his own father. It is incomprehensible that someone who is willing to exploit their own painful family tragedies for publicity would be in charge of American life-and-death situations.

Unlike Bobby, I try not to speak for my father – but I am certain that he and my uncle Bobby, who gave their lives in public service, and my uncle Teddy, who devoted his Senate career to improving health care, would be disgusted.

The American health care system, for all its flaws, is the envy of the world. Its doctors and nurses, researchers, scientists, and caregivers are the most dedicated people I know. Every day, they give their lives to heal and save others. They deserve a knowledgeable leader who is committed to evidence and excellence. They deserve a Secretary committed to advancing cutting-edge medicine to save lives, not rejecting the advances we have already made. They deserve a stable, moral, and ethical person at the helm of this crucial agency. They deserve better than Bobby Kennedy – and so do the rest of us. I urge the Senate to reject his nomination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Caroline Kennedy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Caroline Kennedy

CC: Senate Majority Leader John Thune  
Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer