

From ‘Brilliant’ to ‘Aghast’: Reactions to RFK Jr.’s Nomination for HHS Secretary Run the Gamut

By [Dr. Brenda Baletti](#)

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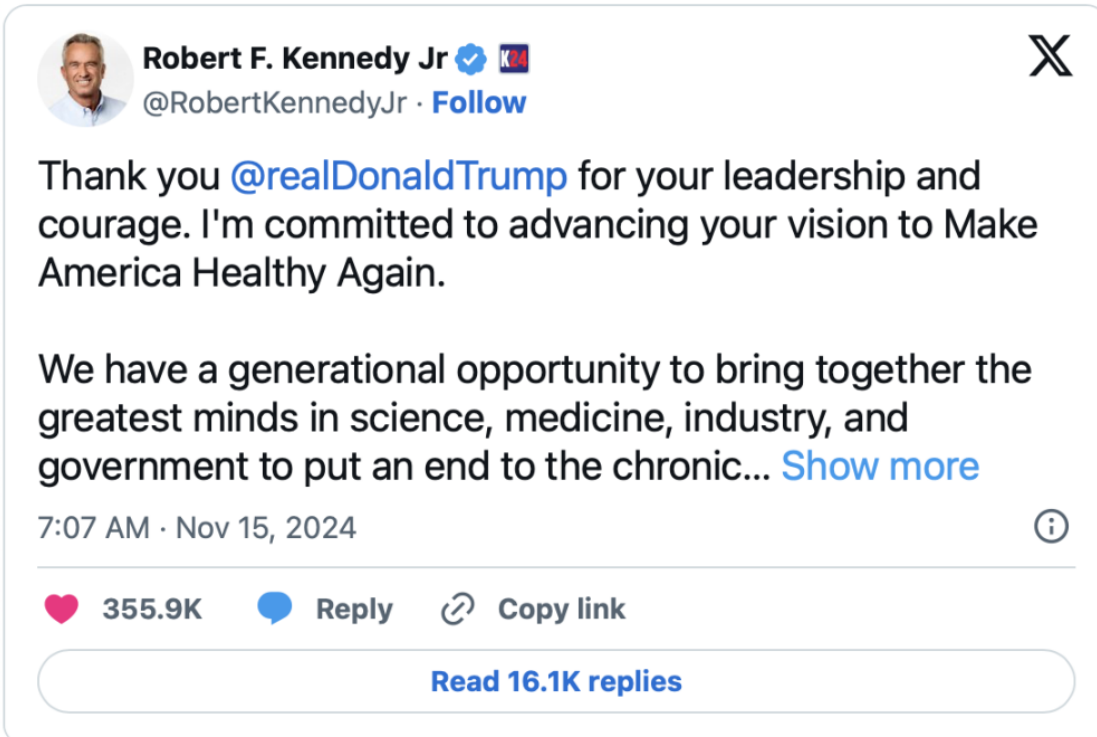
Region: [USA](#)





Theme: [Science and Medicine](#)

From *“brilliant” to “aghost”* — President-elect Donald J. Trump’s nomination on Thursday of [Robert F. Kennedy Jr.](#), founder of Children’s Health Defense (CHD), to run the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) triggered a range of reactions among media outlets, public health officials, and Kennedy’s long-time supporters and detractors.

In a statement posted on Truth Social and X, [Trump said Kennedy](#) would restore the public health agencies “to the traditions of Gold Standard Scientific Research, and beacons of Transparency, to end the Chronic Disease epidemic, and to Make America Great and Healthy Again!”


Kennedy, who promised to fight corruption and end the revolving door between industry and government, [thanked Trump for the nomination](#) on social media. He said he would “free the agencies from the smothering cloud of [corporate capture](#) so they can pursue their mission to make Americans once again the healthiest people on Earth.”






 **Robert F. Kennedy Jr.**  
@RobertKennedyJr · [Follow](#) 

Thank you [@realDonaldTrump](#) for your leadership and courage. I'm committed to advancing your vision to Make America Healthy Again.

We have a generational opportunity to bring together the greatest minds in science, medicine, industry, and government to put an end to the chronic... [Show more](#)

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Kennedy is a longtime critic of how corporate interests have [captured the public health agencies](#) meant to regulate them, and of the [outsized and corrupt](#) role that [Big Pharma](#) plays in American life.

If confirmed, Kennedy would hold the most powerful governmental position in public [health](#), overseeing 80,000 employees across a department that houses [13 agencies](#) and more than 100 programs. Those agencies include the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the National Institutes of Health and the Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services.

CHD CEO Mary Holland told [The Defender](#) the organization “could not be more pleased” with the nomination, adding:

“Kennedy has been devoted to ending the childhood chronic health epidemic for almost 20 years. He has been effective in communicating the failures of our existing public health establishment.

“Based on his extensive litigation history, he is uniquely prepared to reform the regulatory institutions, the research institutions, and public education on health. I look forward to seeing dramatic, measurable improvements in Americans’ health during the Trump administration.”

Cardiologist [Dr. Peter McCullough](#) told Fox News that Kennedy would be “such a contrast” to previous public health leadership. He said Kennedy would focus on data transparency and accountability.

“I think we’re going to see a total overhaul of healthcare administration.”

Democratic Colorado **Gov. Jared Polis** [said on X](#) that he was “excited by the news,” particularly about Kennedy’s commitment to fighting [chemicals in foods](#), the [power of Big Pharma](#), and to other [health priorities](#).

“I hope he leans into personal choice on vaccines rather than bans (which I think are terrible, just like mandates) but what I’m most optimistic about is taking on big pharma and the corporate ag oligopoly to improve our health,” he added.

Rep. Chip Roy (R-Texas) told Fox News,

“I think Robert is another disruptor. We need a disruptor. I will be glad and I’m looking forward to working with him,” [Politico reported](#).

Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.) called Kennedy a “brilliant, courageous truth-teller” and said he could make the “[most significant impact on health](#).”

Vaccine Stocks Take a Dive on News of Announcement

On the flip side, some lawmakers and public health leaders expressed alarm, decrying the nomination.

U.S. Rep. Robert Garcia (D-Calif.) called the choice “f— insane” on X, [Fox News](#) reported.

“He’s a vaccine denier and a tin foil hat conspiracy theorist. He will destroy our public health infrastructure and our vaccine distribution systems. This is going to cost lives.”

Dr. Richard E. Besser, CEO of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and a former acting director of the CDC, said that having Kennedy head up HHS “would pose incredible risks to the health of the nation,” because Kennedy’s critique of the public health agencies was worsening [the mistrust](#) lingering after the coronavirus pandemic, [The New York Times](#) reported.

Besser [told CNN](#) that some of Kennedy’s ideas about chronic health issues regarding children were good ideas, but other ideas were deeply concerning — particularly Kennedy’s proposal that individuals should decide for themselves whether to take a vaccine.

“The idea that receiving childhood vaccines would be a parental choice scares me,” he said.

Current [CDC Director Mandy Cohen](#) raised concerns that Kennedy would use the position to spread misinformation and foster distrust in public health institutions, particularly with respect to vaccines.

Kennedy has called for an [end to immunity for vaccine manufacturers](#) for the injuries caused by their products. He points out that no vaccine on the childhood immunization schedule has undergone proper [safety and efficacy testing](#).

He has been a long-term advocate for the tens of thousands of families seeking compensation for their [children’s vaccine-induced autism](#).

Kennedy also promised that, if confirmed, he would make the [V-safe vaccine injury data](#) collected but not made public by the CDC transparent, so scientists have access to the data necessary to analyze vaccine safety

Vaccine and Pharma stocks fell sharply this morning, following yesterday’s announcement about Kennedy, [Reuters](#) reported.

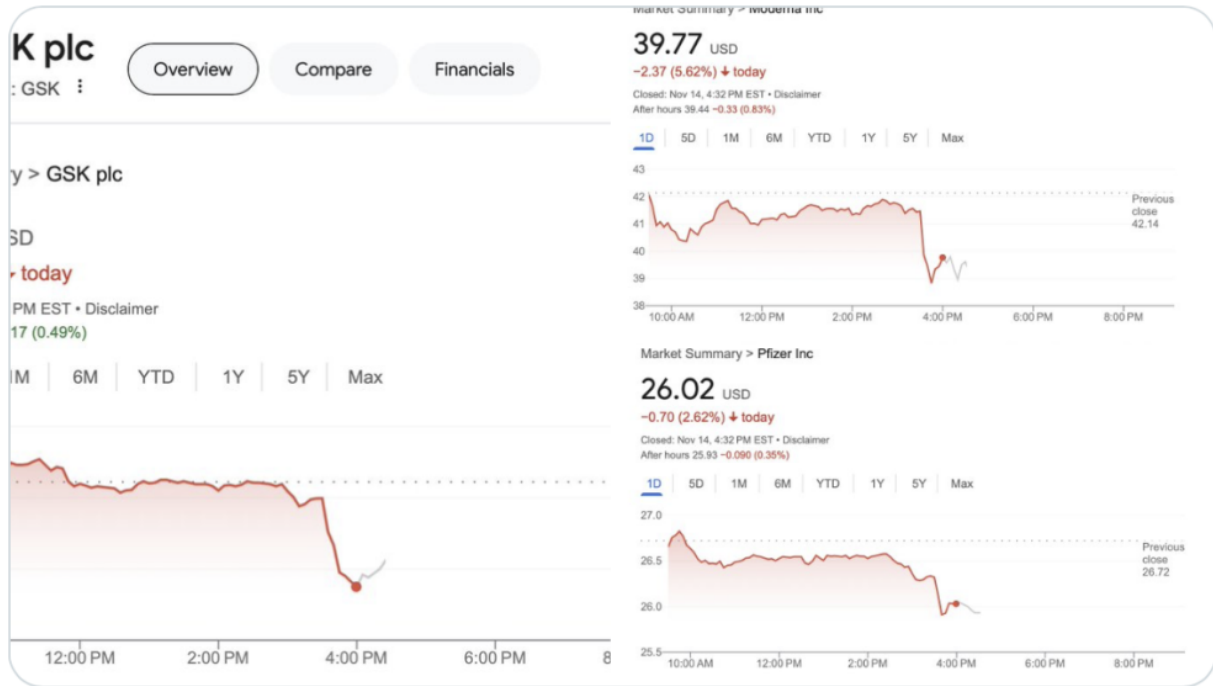
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Pharma stocks all took a nosedive after RFK Jr announcement 🤔



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[Bavarian Nordic](#), which makes the mpox vaccine, was down 16%. Its CEO told Reuters he was concerned that Kennedy could fuel vaccine skepticism.

However, he also said that the U.S. response to the COVID-19 pandemic under Trump’s first term made him confident that the incoming administration would continue to fund biodefense.

The Trump administration launched and oversaw [Operation Warp Speed](#), the public-private partnership to rapidly develop a COVID-19 vaccine that gave vaccine makers hundreds of billions in profits along with total immunity for any harms caused by those investigational vaccines under the [Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness \(PREP\) Act](#).

Kennedy Will be ‘Single Greatest Threat to Profits in America’

Republican advisers have cautioned that Kennedy could face a difficult path to confirmation, [The Washington Post](#) reported, citing his “past statements on [drugs and vaccines](#), and his many personal entanglements.” [FiercePharma](#) said his confirmation process is likely “to be contentious.”

Physician, professor and [Substacker Dr. Vinay Prasad](#) wrote that Trump could use a recess appointment to secure Kennedy’s position, but that he will likely need to be

confirmed by the Senate where

“He has a several hundred billion dollar industry that will do everything possible to stop him.”

“Many of these companies have lobbied throughout Congress,” Prasad added. “They will use those connections. Unlike other controversial appointees, RFK Jr. will be the single greatest threat to profits in America.”

If his appointment goes through, Prasad said Kennedy will face a difficult road in getting his proposed policies enacted, given the entrenched power of Pharma and the power of the media that opposes him.

Law professor Wendy Parmet, director of Northeastern University’s Center for Health Policy and Law, pointed to the potential clash between Kennedy’s anti-industry position and the big-business leanings of the Republican Party.

“We have an administration that promises to deregulate, to be business-friendly, and then we have RFK Jr., who [promises to go after fast food](#),” Parmet told The Washington Post.

Health and Health Freedom Advocates Optimistic Kennedy Will Bring Change

Despite the challenges ahead, [health advocates are optimistic](#) that changes they have been seeking for decades will come to pass.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, critics of pandemic policies were condemned and marginalized. Kennedy was [censored by the Biden administration](#) and social media companies as part of the so-called “[Disinformation Dozen](#)” for airing many of those critiques.

Over the course of the election Kennedy — who [ran for president](#) as a Democrat, then announced he was [running as an independent](#) before suspending his campaign and [endorsing Trump](#) — has repeatedly been called a “conspiracy theorist.” Both Kennedy and CHD are routinely dismissed as “anti-vax” for openly discussing the [scientific evidence](#) on the link between vaccines and chronic diseases including autism, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder or ADHD and other [neuropsychiatric](#) and [autoimmune disorders](#), in some children.

Rather than investigating the science, mainstream media mostly insists these links have been “[debunked](#),” without providing any [evidence](#) for their claim.

Kennedy has also called for the removal of [fluoride](#) from public drinking water, citing recent studies and a [landmark federal court decision](#) that show it interferes with [children’s brain development](#) — a concern that has even been flagged by some mainstream [public health commentators](#).

His supporters hope these issues will now receive serious public attention that will lead to policy change.

[Holland said on X](#) that Kennedy’s nomination came 38 years to the day after the Vaccine

Injury Act that gave vaccine manufacturers immunity from liability was signed into law.

"Let's rewrite this one," she said.

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Brenda Baletti, Ph.D., is a senior reporter for The Defender. She wrote and taught about capitalism and politics for 10 years in the writing program at Duke University. She holds a Ph.D. in human geography from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a master's from the University of Texas at Austin.

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