

Mass. health officials hail vaccine ruling

By [Jason Laughlin](#) Globe Staff, Updated March 16, 2026, 7:55 p.m.



A vaccination clinic at an East Boston elementary school in 2022. JOHN TLUMACKI/GLOBE STAFF

Massachusetts health officials hailed [a ruling Monday by a federal federal judge](#) blocking the Trump administration from implementing sweeping changes to the nation's childhood immunization schedule.

“The judge’s decision includes language and analysis that makes it really clear that it’s a win for public health, that it’s a win for science-based vaccine policy,” said [Carlene Pavlos](#), executive director of the [Massachusetts Public Health Alliance](#), one of the lawsuit’s plaintiffs.

In his 45-page [opinion](#), US District Court Judge Brian Murphy in Boston put a hold on the decisions made by an influential Centers for Disease Control and Prevention vaccine advisory committee, ruling that Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. had improperly replaced the entire committee.

Pavlos said it was a relief that the decision would likely postpone a meeting this week of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices. Previous meetings have included conversations and decisions that were widely condemned as lacking scientific rigor.

“Any time that we can prevent a public forum where the government is using its bully pulpit to spread misinformation,” she said, “the Massachusetts Public Health Alliance is going to try to stop that from happening.”

Massachusetts is one of the best vaccinated states in the country overall, but there are pockets where vaccination rates among children are much lower, particularly in Western Massachusetts. The state recently reported [its first measles cases of the year](#), which raised concerns about the possibility of broader infections in some of those lower vaccinated pockets.

While the overall vaccination rates for kindergarteners in the state have remained high, the percentage of children granted exemptions from vaccine requirements, including religious reasons, was higher in the 2024-2025 school year than it had been in [more than a decade](#).

The state Legislature is considering bills that would bar religious exemptions from school vaccination requirements, and would mandate more comprehensive reporting of vaccination rates from schools.

[The House version](#) of the bill is scheduled for discussion Wednesday in the joint committee on health care financing.

Kennedy's dramatic changes in vaccine policy have spurred a need for local action on vaccine policies, said Katie Blair, director of the pro-vaccination organization [Massachusetts Families for Vaccines](#) and an advocate for the pending legislation.

"I do think it has energized our campaign to some extent," said Blair. "Seeing the dysfunction on the federal level has made it more urgent to take action in the state."

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