



## MEMORANDUM

TO: Sirona Strategies Clients

DATE: November 26, 2024

RE: Background on Dr. Dave Weldon - Nominee for CDC Director

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On November 23, President-elect Trump [announced](#) the appointment of Dr. Dave Weldon to serve as the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Dr. Weldon is an internal medicine physician, Army veteran and former seven-term Republican member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Florida. He is known as a vaccine skeptic.

Dr. Weldon will be the first nominee for CDC director who will need to be confirmed by the Senate because of a [law passed in 2022](#) requiring the role to have such confirmation.

This memo provides an overview of Dr. Weldon's likely priorities and background on health care.

### **Priorities**

Dr. Weldon's key health policy priorities include chronic disease, restoring trust in the CDC and federal health agencies, anti-abortion policies, and vaccine safety. It is anticipated that his priorities will also center around Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s [Make America Healthy Again \(MAHA\)](#) plan, should he be confirmed.

#### *Restructuring the CDC*

Dr. Weldon is expected to partake in Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s plan to restructure the CDC, which has been under intense scrutiny by conservatives in Congress and think tanks regarding its scope and mission. It is expected that Dr. Weldon will be asked to eliminate programs that are not central to the agency's core mission of fighting infectious disease. These efforts are expected to face pushback; eight former CDC directors who served in Democratic and Republican Administrations [warned that](#) restricting the agency's efforts to infectious disease would cost lives and damage the economy.

#### *Chronic Care*

President-elect Trump has publicly noted chronic disease as a priority, stating that the CDC must correct past errors to increase focus on chronic disease prevention. We expect Dr. Weldon to focus on ensuring that the CDC issues resources concerning the underlying causes of disease and the solutions to cure those diseases.

#### *Vaccine Safety*

Dr. Weldon is a [known vaccine-skeptic](#) and could influence the vaccine recommendation process through the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). The Committee examines safety and effectiveness data once a vaccine has been authorized or approved by the FDA. Its recommendations must be approved by the CDC director to become policy. The Committee has up to 19 members whose expertise includes virology, immunology, pediatrics, and infectious diseases and are nominated by the CDC and approved by the HHS Secretary.

### **Background**

Dr. Weldon served in the U.S. House of Representatives, representing Florida's 15th district from 1995 to

2009. He did not seek reelection in 2008. As a Representative, he served on the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, and Education and the House Oversight and Accountability Committee (formerly known as Committee on Oversight and Reform).

During his time in Congress, Dr. Weldon introduced protections for health care workers and organizations that do not provide or aid in abortions. Known as the [Weldon Amendment](#), the clause focuses on “rights of conscience” regarding abortion policy. The amendment, which Congress has reapproved each budget cycle, stipulates that [HHS cannot discriminate](#) in funding decisions against programs or agencies that do not provide abortions.

In 2007, he [introduced](#) the Vaccine Safety and Public Confidence Assurance Act, which would remove vaccine safety research from CDC’s purview and house the work in an independent HHS agency. While the bill never made it to the House floor, calls to restructure the CDC and peel away some of its authorities on infectious disease research have found [new momentum](#) among GOP lawmakers.

Dr. Weldon has a history of controversial perspectives, including linking childhood vaccines with increasing rates of autism. In 2006, Weldon [appeared](#) with parents who claimed that the CDC had covered up evidence tying vaccines to children developing autism. In a television interview from 2008, Dr. Weldon implied there might be an underlying trait that would [cause some children](#) to develop symptoms of autism following vaccination.

Dr. Weldon also served as president of the Alliance of Health Care Sharing Ministries, a trade group for Christian organizations that offer an alternative to traditional health insurance. The group has come under [scrutiny](#) for potentially misleading tactics. Dr. Weldon has stated that the members of his association were clear that they were not offering insurance, which is subject to strict regulations.

Notably, Dr. Weldon will be the first nominee for CDC director who will need to be confirmed by the Senate, following a [2022 law](#) requiring the role to have such confirmation.

## **Conclusion**

[Sen. Cassidy \(R-LA\)](#), the incoming Senate HELP Committee Chair, and [Sen. Scott \(R-FL\)](#) have both expressed support for Dr. Weldon’s nomination. We expect Dr. Weldon’s vision for reforming the CDC to be supported by many Congressional Republicans, including Sen. Cassidy (R-LA).