



Feb. 25, 2026

## **Senate HELP Committee Holds Confirmation Hearing to Consider Casey Means as Surgeon General of the United States**

### *Overview:*

On Feb. 25, the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions held a hearing to consider Casey Means as Director in the Regular Corps of the Public Health Service and Surgeon General of the Public Health Service. Dr. Means' confirmation hearing was originally scheduled for last Oct. but was postponed to Feb. of this year due to the birth of her child. [Dr. Means](#) is a Stanford trained physician who's held biomedical research positions at several large universities. Dr. Means resigned after four years of residency training to pursue a career of "functional medicine principles and nutritional awareness," becoming a health and wellness influencer with a large social media following. Her focus on combatting the root of chronic disease and promoting healthy nutrition habits drew the support of HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and the wider Make America Healthy Again movement, resulting in her nomination by President Trump to serve as the Surgeon General of the United States.

Dr. Means testimony reinforced her [well-publicized views](#) on the failures of mainstream medicine. Dr. Means regularly reiterated her desire to promote medical education focused on holistic wellness and the root causes of chronic disease. She alluded to the [MAHA Strategy report](#), released in May of last year, which posited poor diet, aggregation of environmental chemicals, lack of physical activity and chronic stress, and overmedicalization as the primary drivers of childhood chronic disease in the United States. Republican lines of questioning were largely supportive of Dr. Means' goals and sought her views on the issue of environmental factors not explicitly outlined in the MAHA Report, such as the effect of social media and screen usage on young adults. Dr. Means' responses when questioned about glyphosate, the pesticide chemical [criticized](#) by the MAHA movement for its potential carcinogenic effects but [lauded by the Trump administration in a recent executive order](#), were careful to balance support for the nation's farmers with a goal of decreased reliance on industrial agriculture. Dr. Means also called for a movement of national healing and stated her intentions to work with universities, medical societies, and both parties in Congress to realize her goals, yet committee Democrats were largely skeptical during their question and answer period.

This includes repeated questioning from Senate Democrats on Dr. Means' product endorsements and financial conflicts of interest, such as undisclosed paid advertisements on social media and ownership stakes in wellness companies that promoted unregulated products. Dr. Means repeatedly stated her intention to fully disclose and divest existing conflicts and highlighted previous efforts to rectify conflicts of interest with the Office of Government Ethics. Democratic questioning also aimed to group Dr. Means' views with other MAHA-aligned vaccine skeptics in the administration, such as HHS Secretary Kennedy and FDA Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research Director [Vinay Prasad](#). While Dr. Means repeatedly assured that vaccines were important tools in the fight against disease, she was

careful to dodge questions regarding specific vaccines previously targeted by the administration, such as the [influenza](#) and [hepatitis B](#) vaccines. Instead, Dr. Means often alluded to the importance of informed consent and shared clinical decision making between patients, parents, and providers. While Dr. Means often used this tactic to deflect questions on vaccines, she faced pushback from Committee Chairman Bill Cassidy (R-LA), a hepatologist by training who supports universal hepatitis B immunizations. Senator Cassidy, who believed shared clinical decision making to be commonplace in American physician offices, repeatedly pressed Dr. Means on her views of the hepatitis B vaccine and her vision for increased informed consent. The Committee did not hold a vote to advance Dr. Means' nomination to the full Senate.

*Witnesses:*

- Casey Means, MD

*Committee Leadership:*

- Committee Chair – Bill Cassidy (R-LA)
- Committee Ranking Member – Bernie Sanders (I-VT)

*Question & Answer Highlights:*

Chair Cassidy (R-LA) – Do you believe the abortion pill, mifepristone, is safe and should be prescribed without an in-person visit?

Dr. Means – Every medication has risks and benefits. All patients need to have conversations with their doctor. The question of in-person visits is out of the purview of the Surgeon General.

Chair Cassidy – Do you believe birth control is safe and should be widely accessible?

Dr. Means – I think oral contraceptives should be widely accessible. Patients need to speak with their doctors about risks and benefits.

Chair Cassidy – We've had two children die from measles in West Texas and hundreds of infections in South Carolina. Would you encourage other mothers to vaccinate their children for measles?

Dr. Means – I believe vaccines save lives and are a key part of the public health strategy. I do believe that each patient needs to have a conversation with their pediatrician regarding what's best for their children.

Chair Cassidy – Would you encourage Americans to get the flu vaccine?

Dr. Means – I think it's important to make sure patients have informed consent with their doctor.

Cassidy – We've had an outbreak of whooping cough in my state. Many folks are scared to take vaccines at this point due to the government's view that they may cause autism. Do you believe that vaccines contribute to autism?

Dr. Means – We have an autism crisis that’s increasing in our country. We don’t know what exactly causes autism. The administration has contributed a lot of funding to study this. Science is never settled, so I look forward to seeing the results of our studies.

Ranking Member Sanders – I fought hard for substantive labeling on junk food. Have you come out against junk food ads on television? Would you ban them?

Dr. Means – I agree, but the Surgeon General doesn’t have the purview to ban this. But I’d use my voice to support it.

Ranking Member Sanders – I believe we should ban pharmaceutical advertising, how do you feel?

Dr. Means – I agree.

Ranking Member Sanders – The American Medical Association wrote that there is no link between vaccines and autism, yet Sec. Kennedy believes this. Who is right?

Dr. Means – We have a situation where autism is rising. Vaccine rhetoric has not been a part of my messaging. I’m not here to complicate the conversation.

Ranking Member Sanders – Is health care a human right? Should people in the U.S. be entitled to care?

Dr. Means – My focus is on ensuring Americans’ access to the best health care in the world.

Senator Markwayne Mullin (R-OK) – What’s your passion about health care?

Dr. Means – My vision is to get more healthy, whole food on American’s plates. We need the system to focus on root causes of why we are sick. 90% of health care costs are now going to chronic diseases, but it is not the focus of what doctors spend their time on. We need to educate and treat the shared root causes of chronic disease. I will work with the AMA, medical schools, Dems and Republicans to shift the system toward root causes.

Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) – You said Americans use birth control pills like candy, yet evidence finds them safe and effective. Should women trust the FDA, who approved the pills, or your statements?

Dr. Means – I’m curious if you know what the side effects are. I think this should be accessible to women, but doctors don’t have time for informed consent conversations. These comments were taken out of context. I don’t believe many of the conversations have informed consent.

Senator Murray – Tracey Beth Hougue was elevated by the Trump admin to serve as the top drug regulator. She cast doubts on the RSV vaccine. Do you believe her to be wrong to question the safety of these vaccines?

Dr. Means – I haven’t read the quote. I have no issue holding frank conversations with members of the administration.

Senator Murray – Mental health conditions are the leading cause of maternal death. Dr. Hougue also expressed concern about the use of SSRIs in pregnancy. Do you find them dangerous?

Dr. Means – Every medication has risks and benefits. You need to have a conversation with your doctor.

Senator Tommy Tuberville (R-AL) – How do we get around this? We don't teach nutrition when training doctors. How do we prioritize that.

Dr. Means – This is so key, reforming medical education to address root causes. The administration has momentum toward making this possible, starting with the dietary guidelines for America. By just changing the guidelines, it'll trickle down to billions of healthy meals for Americans. Dr. Makary is also addressing the Generally Recognized as Safe loophole at FDA. This'll also trickle down to affect medical education. We also have more investment and research in regenerative agriculture and a whole person health initiative at NIH.

Senator Tuberville – Do you think this'll be hard to push at medical schools?

Dr. Means – I've spoken with many deans that feel passionate about this. There is political will, the time is now. It's noncontroversial, positive, and unifying.

Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) – You've promoted a lab testing company, Genova Diagnostics, backed by private equity. Before you promoted their tests, the company agreed to pay millions to settle allegations it was charging for unnecessary tests. Were you aware of their prior violations when you promoted them?

Dr. Means – I was not familiar with that settlement. There's a particular test they use on nutrient quality that I find useful. I've worked with the Office of Government Ethics for months to address these issues.

Senator Baldwin – You've also promoted a range of supplements, earning at least \$325,000 since 2024 for promoting them. This includes so-called "longevity" supplements, wellness teas, and elixirs. Your company offers continuous glucose monitoring, while full membership costs \$1,500 a year. Is that one of your solutions to our nation's health problems?

Dr. Means – I certainly don't think every American needs to wear a glucose monitor. But elevated blood sugar is a leading issue in this country.

Senator Baldwin – You've said our system is broken, but it seems you've made your career off profiting off the system. How are Americans supposed to trust you?

Dr. Means – I think you've mischaracterized those connections. I look forward to working with you on policies that make Americans healthier.

Senator John Husted (R-OH) – I've had questions from Ohio farmers on your comments on pesticides. You won't regulate pesticides in your role, but you'll have a voice in the national conversation. What do pesticides mean to the average consumer?

Dr. Means – This is a very complex issue. I have the utmost respect for the American farmer, who are in an impossible situation like doctors. The system is dependent on toxic chemicals to have a food supply. This administration is committed to understanding our food and what's in our bodies. It's a

sensitive issue for farmers and consumers, but I understand the nuance and that changes need to be made thoughtfully. Eventually we'll need to move toward a more sustainable way.

Senator Husted – Do you believe smartphones are negatively affecting children. At what age should children access social media?

Dr. Means – The research shows that social media has a severe impact on children's mental wellbeing. I don't have an exact number for when children should use it, but we should exert an abundance of caution.

Senator Chris Murphy (D-CT) – Are you familiar with FTC policy requiring those recommending products to disclose financial connections to said brands?

Dr. Means – Certainly.

Senator Murphy – There's a pending complaint regarding your failure to adhere to these guidelines. It appears you routinely violated this policy and did not transparently reveal financial connections. In one instance, you reported to this committee that you received payments from a prenatal vitamin maker months before posting on social media that you supported the brand but were not sponsored.

Dr. Means – In any post where I said I wasn't receiving money, I wasn't receiving money at the time. I've spent the past several months working with the Office of Government Ethics to be adherent.

Senator Murphy – Function Health data says you disclosed your partnership less than a third of the time you posted about them. This seems like a systemic instance in which you hide financial connections while promoting products.

Dr. Means – I have a strong feeling that the way your staff gathered this data in a way to make your point. I'd like to see how they came to this conclusion.

Senator Susan Collins (R-ME) – Addiction and overdoses are a major issue for my state. I'm concerned that your book on good energy urges readers to consider psilocybin assisted therapy. You also said you're inspired to try psychedelics. Illicit drug use is a huge problem in this country. Do you stand by what you said? As Surgeon General, how would you speak to Americans about the use of illicit drugs?

Dr. Means – This is a very important question. What I say as a private citizen is different than what I'd say as a public health official. When it comes to psychedelic therapy, I think the science is still emerging. There is exciting work in this area that needs to continue. Under no circumstances would I recommend that to the American people.

Senator Collins – What did you mean by saying you heard an internal voice whispering "it's time to prepare?"

Dr. Means – In the book, I was referencing my mother's death and the feeling of something ominous coming.

Senator Collins – In discussing "wasteful spending," you mentioned money spent by NIH on Alzheimer's amyloid plaque research. That story has been largely debunked. Are you for vigorous research when considering Alzheimer's?

Dr. Means – Unquestionably yes. I’m particularly passionate about this issue. We need to study all environmental factors that contribute to this.

Senator Andy Kim (D-NJ) – Are you currently able to write prescriptions for patients? Are you planning to reactivate your license?

Dr. Means – I haven’t seen patients for years after putting my license on voluntary paused status. My path in medicine took me down to a different, one-to-many approach. For any doctor in a state where required, many physicians in public health service would put their license on inactive status.

Senator Kim – Another role is to lead the commissioned corps. As an officer, “keeping professional licensure is mandatory.” How are you squaring this?

Dr. Means – I have a medical license that’s been voluntarily put on inactive status.

Senator Kim – Do you think we should remove the mandatory licensure for other members of the commissioned corps?

Dr. Means – I don’t think that’s relevant to this hearing. My professional history is a feature, not a bug. I have a medical degree from Stanford University and have completed extremely thorough medical training. The commissioned corps provides an opportunity to tackle the chronic disease epidemic.

Senator Marshall – Dr. Means do you have a medical license? What would be the one thing you could accomplish?

Dr. Means – I do. My dream for this role is to help inspire our system to focus on root causes. This shift will also lower costs monumentally. I want affordable, accessible, nutritious food available to everyone in the country. Lastly, a key passion of mine is to understand how the cumulative burden of environmental exposure affects our health.

Senator Marshall – Not expecting you to decide today, but I want you to consider what warning labels we might place on social media, like alcohol or cigarettes.

Dr. Means – This is an area where the last Surgeon General did incredible work. I’m committed to working with the medical establishment, tech world, and government to reduce the harms of social media and excess screen use.

Senator Marshall – We all acknowledge that processed foods are cheaper, how do we help people afford real food?

Dr. Means – I’m supportive of changes we’re already doing, like the updated dietary guidelines. This will make billions of meals more accessible for people. The GRAS loophole closing in FDA means we won’t even be allowed to put many of these chemicals in food. Recent changes in SNAP are also helping make healthy food affordable.

Senator Lisa Blunt Rochester (D-DE) – As America’s top doctor, people will look to you for health guidance based in science. You said earlier that this isn’t a part of your core message, but I was pleased to hear you say that vaccines save lives. If a mother is hep B positive, is providing the vaccine at birth the most effective way to prevent transmission to the baby?

Dr. Means – I believe certainly. Patients should talk to their doctor, but this is a clear case where yes.

Senator Blunt Rochester – On Dec. 18, the CDC announced funding for a study in West Africa that proposed withholding the Hep B birth dose from half of trial participants without screening mothers for infection. As a doctor and mom, would you agree this is unethical and dangerous?

Dr. Means – I am not familiar with that announcement or study. I don't believe HHS would be interested in withholding.

Senator Blunt Rochester – Would you advise against or refuse to conduct an unethical study if the Secretary or White House urged you to do it?

Dr. Means – I don't believe the Secretary would ask me to do something unethical, but I have no problem standing up.

Senator Jim Banks (R-IN) – You'd be the first MAHA Surgeon General. What does the public not hear about your qualifications?

Dr. Means – I think everyone should read the MAHA Strategy released last year, that outlines the root causes of why we're here. It is a foundational document. I haven't seen this impassioned approach to changing the status quo at the federal level in my lifetime. My hope is to be a unifying, practical messenger.

Senator Banks – What do people need to know about metabolic syndrome? Why isn't the government preventing it?

Dr. Means – Metabolic syndrome refers to the way our cells make energy. By some studies, at least 93% of Americans have biomarkers of one metabolic dysfunction. We need to look at the body as a system, take a unified approach to health, and transform clinical practice in that way.

Senator Banks – You're outspoken about the infertility crisis. Why is that?

Dr. Means – I'm very passionate about this as infertility is rising in this country. Infertility issues are also linked to chronic and metabolic disease conditions, as well as dietary intervention.

Senator Tim Kaine (D-VA) – Secretary Kennedy stated that there is no evidence that the flu vaccines prevent serious disease, hospitals or deaths in children.

Dr. Means – As I've said, I believe vaccines save lives.

Senator Kaine – But do you agree with his statement?

Dr. Means – I personally haven't seen that quote. I'd want to review it.

Senator Kaine – Do you believe there is evidence the flu vaccine prevents serious disease?

Dr. Means – I believe all patients should...

Senator Kaine – So do I, that’s not what I’m asking. There is a mountain of evidence supporting this. Do you believe there is no evidence supporting this? This is an easy one.

Dr. Means – I support the CDC’s guidance on this and will support ACIP. At the population level, I think it does.

Senator Kaine – The Secretary and President have discussed radical transparency. Do you believe that?

Dr. Means – Yes.

Senator Josh Hawley (R-MO) – Can we discuss A.I. for a second? When I’m home, I get asked about the effects of data centers on health. Is this something we should be looking in to?

Dr. Means - It’s an interesting question, and not one I’ve considered before. We’ve understudied how cumulative environmental exposures can affect our health.

Senator Hawley – Is it time to study the effect of A.I. chatbots on minor children? We’ve seen many instances of children’s mental wellbeing affected by chatbots.

Dr. Means – It’s an especially tragic story you’ve shared. We’re aligned that protecting children and minors’ health is a top priority.

Senator Angela Alsobrooks (D-MD) – We agree that industry shouldn’t have an outsized impact over our health policy. Have you ever been compensated for platforming companies in your newsletter or social media? Were you aware one of the companies you mentioned in your newsletter failed to substantiate claims over its health benefits.

Dr. Means – Yes. I take conflicts very seriously and have worked with the Office of Government Ethics to ensure there are no issues. I will not take financial compensation from any companies.

Senator Alsobrooks – Were you aware that Peak, a company you supported, was found by the state of California to use products that contain an unhealthy amount of lead? It seems like you’re doing the same thing pharmaceutical companies do by advertising these products to the public.

Dr. Means – I just want to repeat. I’ve worked with the Office of Government Ethics. I’ve been cleared through an exhaustive process and am fully compliant.

Senator Alsobrooks – Do you recall tweeting that the hepatitis B birth dose is a “crime?”

Dr. Means – That is not the full tweet.

Senator Alsobrooks – How do you believe this is a crime?

Dr. Means – I support vaccines. I believe they are an important part of public health.

Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) – My state has a very long history with hepatitis B, included targeted vaccine campaigns for native children. This made a remarkable difference. You’ve expressed skepticism about the hep B vaccine for newborns. Given the medical consensus, can you explain your view that it isn’t necessary for newborns?

Dr. Means – The concerns and comments you share are incompletely representing my views. I think it's an important vaccine, that has saved thousands or millions of lives. But, I think this administration is committed to the safest vaccine schedule and allowing parents to have informed conversations and shared clinical decision making with doctors.

Senator Murkowski – You said the disease is primarily sexually transmitted or through drug users. We now know it is incredibly contagious and bloodborne. My hope is that you communicate demonstrated positive results of vaccines, not just that everyone should consult their doctor.

Senator John Hickenlooper (D-CO) – For families struggling with infertility, it might be insensitive to say that lifestyle changes are simply the only remedy needed. How much time should a woman of childbearing age take to self-reverse a barrier?

Dr. Means – I can't answer for a specific time period. The broader message is that American people deserve information from medical authorities on what is possible. The key issues causing medical infertility are lifestyle related. The onus is on our medical authorities to make sure Americans see this info clearly and loudly. Patients deserve to know what the research is showing. I think people don't feel discouraged by understanding the environmental levers.

Senator Hickenlooper – You say the cause of autism is multi-factorial. Are those who believe autism is singularly caused by vaccines incorrect?

Dr. Means – I can't speak for everyone whose made this comment. I know people are in pain when considering childhood chronic disease. Most people understand there are multiple factors in every condition.

Senator Ed Markey (D-MA) – We may have some common ground on the issue of food safety and environmental toxins. Do you agree with research that glyphosate is harmful to humans.

Dr. Means – I have concerns about many of the chemicals used in our system. I think they need to be more robustly studied.

Senator Markey – You spoke to the dangers of this substance in a previous blog post. You also wrote that billions of people are impacted by the sublethal chronic impacts. Yet, Donald Trump signed an Executive Order to promote the production of glyphosate and shielded Monsanto from lawsuits. Do you think the executive order will put American family's health at risk?

Dr. Means – We both know these issues around agriculture and health are extremely complex. My understanding is the order has to do with national security and decreased reliance on foreign countries. We must move away from using toxic inputs in our food supply. I'm concerned about the health impact. We cannot overturn the agriculture system overnight. My focus would be on protecting consumers and their health.

Senator Markey – I'm disappointed to see you back away from your efforts, as Secretary Kennedy has.

Dr. Means – I'm not backing away; this is a core passion of my life. The administration has stated in the MAHA report that they plan to study the effects of chemicals.

Chair Cassidy – When you discuss informed consent and shared clinical decision making, are you speaking about something more than the current standard? Like a formal consent form?

Dr. Means – I mean we need to make sure we're unburdening our doctors.

Chair Cassidy – But this already happens. Are you advocating for something different than what already happens? Are you asking for a formal informed consent process, as done with surgeries, for immunization?

Dr. Means – You and I both know the constraints on doctors are monumental. I spoke to a physician last week who saw 28 patients in a morning clinic. Physicians are overburdened. For all of our vaccines, we want gold standard trials, injury compensation, transparent post-licensing data, and a system where doctors have more time to spend with patients.

Senator Cassidy – The Secretary claims that the \$5 reimbursement doctors receive for vaccinating children represents a conflict of interest. Would that be considered negative?

Dr. Means - I want to back up and reassure you this is an agenda I don't intend to complicate. I support the administration's efforts to restore trust in public health.

Senator Cassidy – Do you agree with the need for universal hepatitis B immunization?

Dr. Means – Right now, any parent can walk into a physician's office and receive a hepatitis B vaccine for their child with zero cost sharing. Its an important vaccine but parent autonomy is important.

Senator Cassidy – I agree. The question is, is universal hepatitis B immunization an important goal?

Dr. Means – I feel like we're going in a semantic loop here. I think all children should receive it at some point in their youth.

*Hearing Recording:*

- <https://www.help.senate.gov/hearings/nomination-of-casey-means-to-be-medical-director-in-the-regular-corps-of-the-public-health-service-and-surgeon-general-of-the-public-health-service>