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OCTOBER 22, 1974

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

IMMUNIZATION ACTION WEEK, 1974

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A PROCLAMATION

This Nation has always been committed to fostering the health of its people, and particularly of its children. Immunization against disease has been an exciting chapter in that effort. The United States can take pride in the dedicated research which has produced safe and effective vaccines against polio, measles, rubella, and other childhood diseases.

Cooperation by the medical profession and public health organizations in distributing these vaccines to children has achieved dramatic reductions in diseases which can kill, cripple, or cause birth defects, including mental retardation. Because of their tragic consequences, we dare not let down our guard against a resurgence of these diseases.

The President's Committee on Mental Retardation has brought to my attention an alarming decline of immunity levels among pre-school children. Last year more than 40 percent of these children were unprotected against either polio, measles, rubella, diphtheria, pertussis, or tetanus. On polio, for example, the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Center for Disease Control reports that immunization levels dropped from 79 percent in 1963 to 60 percent in 1973.

Our children are America's future. Let us make that future a healthy one, for their sake and the Nation's sake.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GERALD R. FORD, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim the week beginning October 20, 1974, as "Immunization Action Week," and call upon all parents, educators, and medical personnel to exert renewed efforts during this week and throughout the year to immunize every American child against diseases for which vaccines are available.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand, this twenty first day of October, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred seventy-four, and of the Independence of the United States of America the one hundred ninety-ninth.

GERALD R. FORD

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