



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
HARRISBURG

15:
Steve McLaughlin
MILTON J. SHAPP
GOVERNOR

July 8, 1976

The Honorable Gerald R. Ford
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D. C. 20500

Dear President Ford:

It is with grave concern that I call upon you to provide immediate direction to the mass influenza immunization program which you announced in a news conference on March 24, 1976.

At that time, many of the nation's top medical and scientific experts met with you and concurred that we needed a massive influenza immunization program as a preventive public health measure against a strain of virus, defined as A-New Jersey-76 (Swine Flu). It was feared then that this new strain of influenza might be as virulent as the 1917-1918 worldwide epidemic which claimed more American lives than World War I.

Your recommendation led to the unprecedented appropriation by Congress of \$135 million for this massive preventive health program. Pennsylvania public health officials joined with most of their counterparts in other states in applauding your action, noting that "an ounce of prevention was indeed worth a pound of cure." However, since that time, the entire Swine Flu Program has been engulfed in controversy involving the legal and scientific interests across the nation.

The American public is bewildered and confused by the conflicting reports emanating from the Federal government.



For example:

-- One pharmaceutical company made the wrong type vaccine.

-- Federal testing of the Swine Flu vaccine by the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia, was inconclusive as to the vaccination of children.

-- There has been no administrative or congressional action taken on granting indemnification to vaccine manufacturers against claims for injury related to inoculation.

-- We have no assurance, because of the conflicting reports, whether Americans will indeed roll up their sleeves for shots this fall against a flu virus which may not come this winter.

-- Most states are hardpressed by their share of the \$135 million to deliver vaccine and the required administrative support to 80 percent of their populations.

Here in Pennsylvania, our Department of Health has been prepared since early May to administer your immunization program. Dr. Theodore Cooper, Assistant Secretary for Health, U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, has referred to Pennsylvania's proposed immunization program as one of the most ambitious in the nation. Just this week, I signed a special \$1,390,000 appropriation to help administer the program throughout the Commonwealth.

Unfortunately, with each passing day, lack of Federal guidelines and direction on the legal issues have seriously jeopardized public confidence in this preventive health program. Our deadlines for inoculating high risk groups and the mass population have been pushed back several times by Federal indecision.

Throughout this entire four-month period, you have remained silent. I now urge you to step in personally and direct your administration to resolve the scientific, and, particularly, the legal differences which have sidetracked this program and confused the American public.

Should this program fail, we may never again be able to mount the type of preventive health programs so necessary to save thousands of lives in any given year.



President Gerald R. Ford
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If in fact, Swine Flu can be expected to take thousands of American lives this fall and winter, your administration should move the mass influenza immunization program off dead-center.

If not, the truth should be told now.

Pennsylvania continues to be greatly concerned about the outcome of this dilemma and you have my assurances we will do all we can to promote and implement a genuine preventive immunization program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Milton J. Shapp', with a horizontal line drawn through it.

MILTON J. SHAPP
Governor

cc: Pennsylvania Members of Congress
Dr. Leonard Bachman, Pa. Health Secretary



cc
August 5, 1976

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Dear Governor Shapp:

This is in further response to your letter of July 8, concerning the national influenza immunization campaign which the President announced last March.

The President has taken a personal interest in seeing that this needed program overcomes the obstacles which it now faces, and that immunization against this new type of influenza virus is made available to all Americans.

The Congress has begun favorable action on our proposal to provide Federal indemnification for the manufacturers of the vaccine, and thus break the deadlock between manufacturers and the insurance industry on the question of liability. This will enable the program to proceed as planned.

The remaining scientific questions which prevent us from making firm vaccination recommendations for those under age 25 are also being addressed at the present time. Data from additional field trials will permit us to answer these questions by early September.

I appreciate your support of this unprecedented effort and assure you that I will do everything in my power to see that it succeeds.

Sincerely,

Stephen G. McConahey
Special Assistant to the President
for Intergovernmental Affairs

The Honorable Milton J. Shapp
Governor of Pennsylvania
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120

cc: Spencer Johnson



AUG 6 1976
CENTRAL FILES