



August 8, 2017

Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.
Chairman of the Board
World Mercury Project
1227 North Peachtree Pkwy, Suite 202
Peachtree City, Georgia 30269

Dear Mr. Kennedy:

Thank you for your e-mail of June 21st and your letter of July 3rd, in follow up to our meeting at NIH on May 31, 2017. We have carefully reviewed and considered your questions and requests, but regretfully we are not optimistic that much further progress can be made in these discussions. The approaches that you and your colleagues have advocated rest on the assumption that vaccines are unsafe. In our view and that of the vast majority of objective experts in medicine and public health, there is overwhelming scientific evidence that supports the safety and exceptional value of vaccinations. While you have gone to some length to provide citations of studies that contradict that conclusion, most of those represent small and unreplicated studies published in less rigorous journals, and have clearly been chosen by you in a fashion that reflects your prior conclusion about vaccine risk (especially regarding thimerosal), not in a truly objective effort to discover the truth. Furthermore, you and your colleagues support your conclusions by equating legal decisions about vaccines as being equivalent to the results of carefully designed research studies. Very different criteria and standards are employed in these two different processes and a legal decision cannot substitute for a research finding.

Given these fundamental differences, we are at a loss for how to move these discussions forward productively. Compelling evidence documents that the benefit/risk ratio of vaccines is extremely high. We cannot condone studies that withhold vaccines from significant numbers of children, placing large segments of our population at risk for infectious diseases—some of which can be life-threatening—as has recently been demonstrated by the outbreaks of measles in Minnesota and Italy. The claimed causal connection between childhood vaccines and autism, based on an initial British study that has been conclusively shown to be fabricated, has been exhaustively studied in hundreds of thousands of children and resoundingly rejected.

We stand ready to re-engage if you are willing to reconsider your fundamental position, based on the weight of the evidence. We face many challenges to prevent disease. However, vaccines are not the problem, they are a solution.

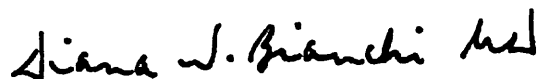
Sincerely yours,

Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D.
Director
National Institutes of Health

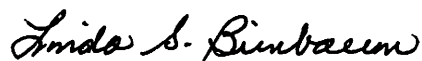
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