



April 2, 2026

The Honorable Bill Cassidy, M.D.
Chairman
Senate Committee on Health, Education,
Labor, and Pensions
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC, 20510

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Health, Education,
Labor, and Pensions
332 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC, 20510

Dear Chairman Cassidy, Ranking Member Sanders, and members of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee,

I am writing to you as interim president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC). The ERLC represents the public policy interests of the Southern Baptist Convention, the largest Protestant denomination in the United States, with over 46,000 churches and nearly 13 million members.

The nomination of Dr. Casey Means to be our nation's next surgeon general is, for Southern Baptists, cause for deep concern. The Surgeon General is the country's top doctor and a high profile public health spokesperson. Dr. Means' displayed convictions raise a number of concerns for us as Southern Baptists. We urge opposition to Dr. Means' nomination for the following reasons.

First, as the Bible teaches, Southern Baptists affirm the full dignity of every human being and believe that every life is worthy of protection and celebration. We believe life begins at conception and that all forms of abortion deny precious preborn human beings of their very lives.

Dr. Means has repeatedly opposed these positions and supported abortion. In her confirmation hearing, Means skirted questions regarding the chemical abortion pill. She declined to provide a clear answer regarding her stance on reinstating even minimal commonsense safety protocols, like in-person dispensing requirements.¹ She stated that mifepristone should be widely accessible, on the grounds that "all medications have risks and benefits", heralding the principle of individual autonomy.² While rulemaking authority on mifepristone does not lie with the Surgeon General, it is alarming that the candidate for our nation's top public health official is clearly noncommittal on such a powerful drug, a drug that harms women and robs innocent children of their very lives.

¹ <https://www.cnn.com/2026/02/25/health/casey-means-surgeon-general-senate-hearing>

² <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c9g5y2yqw2zo>

Second, Dr. Means' blatant flaunting of prior illicit drug use is reason for alarm. It is the explicit duty of the Surgeon General to "[provide] Americans with the best scientific information available on how to improve their health and reduce the risk of illness and injury."³ But Dr. Means' ongoing experimentation with psilocybin is not only explicitly against federal law⁴—which is troubling enough for a nominee for such an important public position—it is also a display of failed medical and moral discernment. Those who seek to lead others in pursuit of health and wellness would not ignore the lack of serious, evidence-based clinical data on psilocybin use. Doing so is contrary to the protocols of the office she seeks.

The Surgeon General's job is to be a trusted voice on matters of public health. In addition, he or she should be both a medical and moral example to the American people, not promoting beliefs or practices that are detrimental to public health and the public good. Sadly, based on this broad criteria and the specific concerns cited above, Dr. Means is not qualified to serve as our country's next surgeon general.

Should her nomination come up for a vote in committee, we urge you, with abundant cause for medical, moral, and legal concern, to oppose Dr. Means' nomination.

Respectfully,



Dr. Gary Hollingsworth
Interim President
Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission
Of the Southern Baptist Convention

³ <https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/index.html#:~:text=The%20U.S.%20Surgeon%20General%20is,risk%20of%20illness%20and%20injury>.

⁴ <https://www.justice.gov/archive/ndic/pubs6/6038/index.htm#:~:text=Yes%2C%20psilocybin%20is%20illegal,.under%20the%20Controlled%20Substances%20Act>.