Plummeting Vaccination Rates Cost States Millions

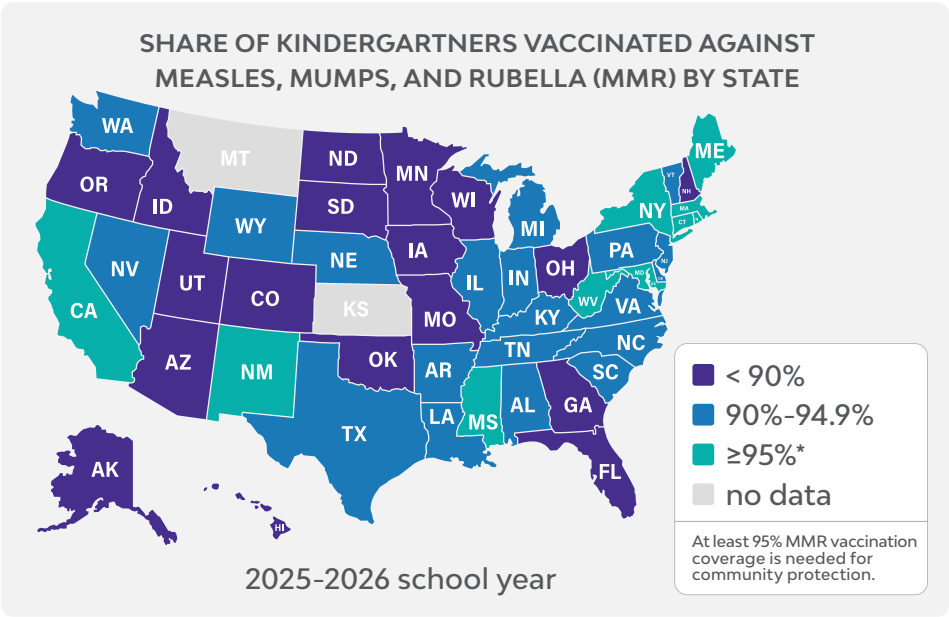
Preventable diseases are returning as childhood vaccination rates fall—and families and states are paying the price.

- **Emergency Care**
- **Missed Work**
- **School Absences**
- **Outbreak Response**

The Problem

States at risk: **40 states** report statewide immunization rates that leave kindergartners vulnerable to outbreaks.

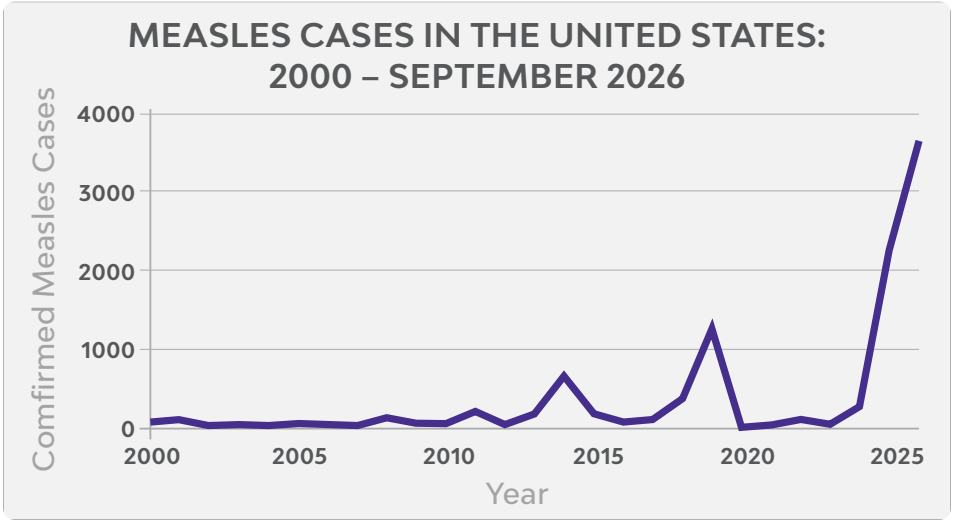
Pockets of lower vaccination rates at the community level leave additional groups at risk.



The Result

As of October 22, 2026, the United States had recorded **4,852** confirmed measles cases—about twice the total for all of 2025.

In 2026, Pennsylvania experienced the state's biggest measles outbreak in decades — and New York declared a state disaster emergency in response to its measles outbreak.



The Costs

Outbreaks greatly inflate state spending:



Direct medical costs

$37,000 in average medical costs for children hospitalized with complications from vaccine-preventable diseases.



Increased spending

$18,800 per measles case in median public health response costs (2018 dollars).



Missed work

Nearly **10 days of work** missed by parents of sick children, reducing economic productivity and tax revenue.



Costs of responding to a measles outbreak

Perspective	Per outbreak	Per case
Healthcare provider & Insurance	$556,583	$33,415
Public Health agency	$766,013	$58,592
Societal	$1,300,716	$18,066

State budgets paid the price:

South Carolina

$2.1 million[1]

Texas

$18.5 million[2]

Pennsylvania

An estimated **$18 million** and counting.[3]

The Solution

State lawmakers can avoid this spending — by prioritizing strong vaccine policy and preventing outbreaks before they happen.

[1] in state-estimated costs (October 2025–March 2026).

[2] in public health response costs (2025).

[3] **Modeled response costs** based on **reported cases** as of Oct. 7, 2026.