



# SHAPE

**Mission: Eradicating Heart Attacks**

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**Mission:**

*To eradicate heart attacks by  
championing new strategies  
for prevention while  
advancing the scientific quest  
for a cure.*

Monday, January 26, 2026

The Honorable Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20201

CC: Dr. Mehmet Oz, Director, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services

**An Open Letter to Robert F. Kennedy Jr.  
Regarding the Urgent Need to Modernize the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force**

Dear Secretary Kennedy,

We write as a coalition of physicians, scientists, and public health leaders who have devoted our careers to preventing disease rather than reacting to its late-stage consequences. We share your stated commitment to improving the healthspan and long-term well-being of the American people. In that spirit, we urge you to take decisive action to modernize the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) through the appointment of members with proven records in forward-looking, innovative preventive care.

The USPSTF exerts extraordinary influence over U.S. health policy. Its recommendations determine insurance coverage, shape clinical practice, and define which preventive services Americans can access. Yet despite this authority, the Task Force has too often functioned as a retrospective body, evaluating prevention through outdated evidence frameworks rather than anticipating emerging opportunities. As a result, many USPSTF recommendations lag far behind contemporary science and real-world clinical needs.

This backward-looking approach has had serious consequences. Prevention is frequently endorsed only after decades of outcomes data accumulate, by which time millions of Americans have already suffered avoidable illness, disability, or death. In an era of advanced imaging, precision diagnostics, artificial intelligence, and scalable population-based prevention, this delay is no longer defensible.

Cardiovascular disease is the clearest example. It has been the leading cause of death in the United States for nearly a century, yet the USPSTF offers no recommendation for early detection or treatment of asymptomatic cardiovascular disease. As a result, most Americans with advanced but silent atherosclerosis remain unidentified until they present with a heart attack, stroke, heart failure, or sudden death. Our national policy still waits for catastrophe before acting.

This posture ignores decades of scientific progress showing that cardiovascular disease is detectable long before symptoms arise, that risk is poorly captured by traditional risk factors alone, and that early identification can change outcomes. It also perpetuates

inequity, as those with fewer resources are least able to access preventive care outside of USPSTF-endorsed pathways. The USPSTF must do more than adjudicate the past. It should help set a proactive national prevention agenda. That requires leadership willing to engage emerging evidence, modern diagnostics, and implementation science, rather than deferring action until long after preventable harm has occurred. Other fields, including oncology and infectious disease, have embraced early detection as a national priority. Cardiovascular prevention has not.

As you consider appointments to the USPSTF, we respectfully urge that selection be guided by demonstrated expertise and impact, including:

- A track record in early disease detection and prevention
- Experience translating innovation into population-level practice
- Familiarity with modern diagnostics, imaging, and digital health tools
- Willingness to challenge outdated paradigms when they no longer serve patients

An overhaul of the USPSTF is long overdue. Americans deserve a preventive health strategy that acts before disease steals years of productive life, diminishes quality of life, or drives unsustainable healthcare costs.

We urge you to seize this opportunity for meaningful reform. By modernizing the USPSTF and reorienting it toward proactive, science-driven prevention, you can help place the nation on a path toward fewer preventable deaths, longer healthspan, and better outcomes for all Americans.

Respectfully,

**Valentin Fuster, MD, PhD**

President, Mount Sinai Fuster Heart Hospital, Physician-in-Chief, Mount Sinai Hospital

**Morteza Naghavi, MD**

Founder and CEO, Society for Heart Attack Prevention and Eradication (SHAPE)

**On behalf of the Signatories (listed in alphabetic order):**

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2. **Arthur Agatston, MD, FACC**  
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