



Homeland Security Walks Back Director's Claim US Taking 'Close Look' At Vaccine Passports

Description

USA: The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) on Friday walked back comments made by the agency's chief, who suggested earlier in the day that the federal government was "taking a very close look" at the idea of requiring vaccine passports to enter or leave the United States.

"Looking ahead to summer, Europe and other countries are going to open up. Could we see vaccine passports to travel internationally either into or out of the U.S.?" an ABC "Good Morning America" host asked Alejandro Mayorkas, head of the DHS.

"We're taking a very close look at that," Mayorkas responded.

But DHS said Mayorkas was only talking about how Americans will need to use such passports to enter other countries.

"We've always said we're looking at how we can ensure Americans traveling abroad have a quick and easy way to enter other countries. That's what the secretary was referring to; ensuring that all U.S. travelers will be able to easily meet any anticipated foreign country entry requirements," an agency spokesperson told news outlets.

"There will be no federal vaccinations database and no federal mandate requiring everyone to obtain a single vaccination credential," the department also said.

The White House had responded to Mayorkas' statement by saying the same thing.

Asked to explain his comments, spokeswoman Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters on Air Force One:

“Again, the U.S. government recognizes that other countries have or may have foreign-entry requirements. We will be monitoring these and helping all U.S. travelers meet those, but we will not be—there will be no federal mandate requiring anyone to obtain a single vaccination credential.”



Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas testifies before a Senate panel in Washington on May 26, 2021. (Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images)

The Biden administration has previously said multiple times that it will not require vaccine passports, or proof of vaccination, on the federal level.

However, the administration is working with private companies to set guidelines for passport systems.

A variety of groups have raised concerns about vaccine passports, arguing it would be an overreach of government authority to require vaccination proof. A number of states have banned requiring of passports, such as Georgia, and Sens. Ted Cruz (R-Texas), Mike Braun (R-Ind.), and Cynthia Lummis

(R-Wyo.) announced Friday they were introducing a bill that would ban them.

“Americans shouldn’t be discriminated against because of COVID-19 vaccine status—whether that is at work or in everyday life. Americans have a well-established right to privacy that any mandated vaccine passport would destroy. A vaccine passport would be discriminatory against people who, for whatever reason, do not get the COVID-19 vaccine. We should be encouraging individuals to receive the vaccine through increased patient protections, not mandating it,” Cruz said in a statement.

“The truth is not everyone can receive the COVID-19 vaccine—for legitimate reasons. I got the vaccine because it was the right decision for me, but people should be free to make the decision that is right for them and consult with their doctor if they have concerns. Individuals who are unable to receive the vaccine should not be denied access to aspects of everyday life or the opportunity to participate in society. Mandating the vaccine or requiring all individuals to be fully vaccinated before returning to normal life could prevent America from fully reopening,” he added.

The United States earlier in the week hit the milestone of 50 percent of adults being fully vaccinated against the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) virus, which causes COVID-19.

As of May 28, that percentage was up to nearly 51 percent, or 131.3 million Americans 18 or older. Another 29 million have gotten one dose and are waiting for their second one.

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