

## **An Open Letter to President Trump and Vice President Pence**

July 14, 2020

President Donald J. Trump  
Vice President Mike Pence  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump and Vice President Pence:

More than 3.3 million Americans have been infected with the novel coronavirus, and more than 135,000 have died from coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) — and these confirmed counts significantly underestimate the true numbers, with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimating that the number of people in the U.S. who have been infected with the coronavirus may be 10 times higher than the official count. Across the U.S., the number of new daily confirmed coronavirus cases has surged dramatically, with 23 states and the District of Columbia reporting increases of more than 50% as of July 12 compared with two weeks earlier, and 20 other states reporting increases of between 5% and 50%.

The catastrophic course of the pandemic in the U.S. stands in stark contrast to that seen in nearly every other comparably wealthy nation in the world. For example, in the European Union, which has a population of 446 million, the rolling three-day average of daily confirmed cases peaked at nearly 30,000 on March 28, then fell dramatically and has remained below 5,200 since June 1. In contrast, in the U.S., which has a population of 330 million, the rolling three-day average of daily confirmed cases reached an initial peak of just over 34,000 on April 11, slowly decreased to about 19,000 on May 28, and now has surged to more than 60,000.

Other nations succeeded in substantially reducing the rate of new coronavirus cases because their leaders consistently implemented the recommendations of public health experts.

In contrast, under your failed leadership, the Executive Branch's response to the pandemic has been inept and incoherent in nearly every respect. From the beginning, you have contradicted and otherwise undermined critical messaging by your own public health experts. You failed to promptly order the implementation of a federally funded and coordinated plan for massively scaled-up testing, community tracing, and quarantining of all infected individuals and their potentially infected contacts. You encouraged states to ignore your own task force's guidelines for a gradual, stepwise approach for reopening businesses and relaxing stay-at-home restrictions. You failed to ensure the implementation of a mandatory federal standard to protect workers from exposure to the coronavirus. You failed to take steps to mitigate the significant racial inequities that have caused Black and Latino people to be harmed by the coronavirus at much higher rates. You promoted the use of unproven, dangerous drugs to treat and prevent COVID-19. You repeatedly disparaged the public health benefits of wearing face masks. Most recently, you recklessly decided to resume large indoor rallies in states with surging coronavirus cases at which social-distancing guidelines were ignored and few people wore face masks.

Your dangerous words and deeds have encouraged millions of Americans to flout the guidelines on social distancing, avoidance of large indoor gatherings, and wearing face masks in settings where social distancing is difficult to maintain – key proven public health measures for containing the pandemic and saving lives until a vaccine or breakthrough treatment is developed and widely available.

In summary, your callous disregard for human life during the still-raging coronavirus pandemic is appalling and must cease.

The undersigned consumer advocacy, public health, civil society, workers' rights, and human rights organizations therefore call upon you, President Trump and Vice President Pence, to immediately step aside from any further role in leading or communicating about the federal response to the pandemic and to delegate full operating authority over the response to senior professional public health and medical experts within the agencies of the U.S. Public Health Service. Such action will lay the essential public health groundwork needed to both save lives and restore the economy.

We represent a wide array of the civic community and would appreciate the opportunity to speak with you by telephone on this issue and to answer any additional questions you may have. Please contact Dr. Michael Carome, Director of Public Citizen's Health Research Group, at [mcarome@citizen.org](mailto:mcarome@citizen.org) with your response

Sincerely,

American Muslim Health Professionals (AMHP)  
Americans for Democratic Action, Southern California Chapter  
Center for Social Epidemiology/Healthy Work Campaign  
Center for Study of Responsive Law  
Coalition on Human Needs  
Labor of Love Safety Training  
National Black Justice Coalition  
National Employment Law Project  
National Partnership for Women & Families  
National Women's Health Network  
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice  
People's Action  
Progressive Democrats of America  
Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)  
Public Citizen  
SafeWork Washington  
Shriver Center on Poverty Law  
Social Security Works  
Universal Health Care Action Network