

Science —Not Politics— Will Lead Us Out of COVID-19

The deadly COVID-19 pandemic has caused national economic disruption and generated significant uncertainty for many Americans. The development of safe, effective vaccines and treatments are essential to protect the public's health and restore the nation's economy.

As we persevere and eagerly anticipate the end of the pandemic, we need trusted guidance from our nation's leaders.

To promote public health and economic recovery, government decisions must be based on evidence – not politics or individual interests. Decisions perceived as influenced by political priorities lower the public's confidence in science, research, innovation, and public health efforts. Already, 78 percent of Americans worry the COVID-19 vaccine approval process is being driven by politics rather than science. The leaders of our federal agencies—even if they serve as political appointees—must be independent voices that are guided by evidence and the integrity of their agencies' employees.

By clearly explaining the processes in place to ensure scientific rigor, federal agencies and government leaders will build the confidence and public trust necessary for America to meet this challenge. Leaders should directly address public concern and skepticism about the rapid development of COVID-19 vaccinations, including expressed worries that “steps are being skipped” or questions about safety. Focusing on the well-established guidelines for federal approval, rather than factors impacting the timing of an authorization, will foster trust and bolster the public's willingness to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. Federal agencies and government leaders can also partner with trusted clinician, patient, and minority community organizations to build confidence through transparent communications. We will not be able to fully “return to normal” until an effective vaccine is widely available and accepted as safe.

Evidence derived from clinical trials that meet FDA standards should drive assessment of which COVID-19 therapeutics are safe and effective. In times of crisis, it is natural to want to offer hope to those facing hardship. However, federal agencies need to continue to support the existing, formal scientific efforts that allow for the study of the safety and efficacy of experimental therapeutics. Authorizing widespread use prematurely may impede participation in the types of comparative studies needed to illustrate the safety and effectiveness of a treatment.

Routine, rapid, accurate, and easy-to-access COVID-19 testing—followed by timely and efficient contact tracing—is needed to help prevent community spread. Individuals exposed to a person with COVID-19 should be tested, even if they are not (yet) exhibiting symptoms. Known asymptomatic carriers must be directed to isolate to reduce community spread. The ability to rapidly test, contact trace, and quarantine individuals with a confirmed COVID-19 infection will empower America to restore a robust national economy and safely allow in-person school attendance.

The nation looks to the leaders of our health care agencies to establish and maintain confidence in public health guidance, vaccines, and therapeutics. By sticking to science, you build public faith in the process. **Stand strong and we will join with you to communicate that scientists are leading the way to ensure treatments and vaccines are safe and effective—and in turn—lead the nation to full recovery.**

AcademyHealth	American Medical Association	Biophysical Society	Infectious Diseases Society of America	National Organization for Rare Disorders
Aging Life Care Association	American Nurses Association	CancerCare	Lakeshore Foundation	National Psoriasis Foundation
AliveAndKickn	American Pharmacists Association	Caregiver Action Network	Lupus and Allied Diseases Association, Inc.	National Treasury Employees Union (representing the employees of FDA)
Alliance for Aging Research	American Psychiatric Association	Coalition for the Life Sciences	Lupus Foundation of America	NBIA Disorders Association
Alpha-1 Foundation	American Society for Cell Biology	Consortium of Social Science Associations	Men's Health Network	Phelan-McDermid Syndrome Foundation
Alstrom Syndrome International	American Society of Consultant Pharmacists	COPD Foundation	Mended Hearts	Prevent Blindness
American Academy of Family Physicians	American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene	Entomological Society of America	MLD Foundation	Prostate Cancer International
American Academy of Neurology	Arthritis Foundation	Epilepsy Foundation	National Association of Social Workers (NASW)	Public Affairs Council
American Academy of Pediatrics	Association of American Medical Colleges	Everylife Foundation for Rare Diseases	National Breast Cancer Coalition	Spina Bifida Association
American Anthropological Association	Association of Black Cardiologists	Families USA	National Communication Association	StopAfib.org
American Association for Dental Research	Association of Jewish Aging Services	Federation of American Scientists	National Consumers League	The Arc of the United States
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy	Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO)	FORCE: Facing Our Risk of Cancer Empowered	National Foundation for Infectious Diseases	The Gerontological Society of America
American Association on Health and Disability	Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America	Friends of Cancer Research	National Health Council	The Mended Hearts, Inc
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists	Big Cities Health Coalition	Global Healthy Living Foundation	National Hispanic Medical Association	Thomas J. Long School of Pharmacy, University of the Pacific
American College of Physicians		Global Liver Institute	National Medical Association	Tribal Ground LLC
American Geriatrics Society		GO2 Foundation for Lung Cancer	National Minority Quality Forum	USP
		HealthyWomen		
		Hermansky-Pudlak Syndrome Network		



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