

To Whom It May Concern,

We are the doctors, medical professionals, and emergency room physicians of Houston, dutifully serving on the frontlines of this pandemic and trying to keep our patients, our families, and ourselves alive. Being a medical professional is challenging enough — but the stress of the COVID pandemic is magnifying every imaginable strain on our medical community as our city has become the nation's newest epicenter.

The flood of Texans concerned they have this debilitating disease, only to be disappointed by unreliable, long-delayed tests. The patients we send home with hopes they don't get worse — only to have them return when their lungs feel as though they're on fire. The helplessness of watching a young and healthy Texan struggling to breathe — or witnessing an entire family devastated by a disease they never saw coming. These are the realities of COVID in Houston.

And while all this misery and pain was true before May, reopening Texas the wrong way has made this so much worse. Now, every day is a struggle to keep a packed waiting room from spreading the infection while we frantically replace our protective equipment for the next round of this endless fight and find space for the new wave of hospitalizations.

As COVID continues to surge through our community, we are utterly exhausted and overwhelmed. It is clear that the hands-off approach to public health, the lack of clear messaging, and the modeling of risky behavior by certain elected officials is severely damaging our ability to keep the citizens of Texas safe. COVID does not care about your politics, but the politicians that minimize this wave of sickness and death are simply feeding the fire of an already-tragic pandemic.

That's why we're speaking out to condemn two politicians spreading the virus of disinformation: **Lt. Governor Dan Patrick and Congressman Dan Crenshaw.**

The COVID-19 pandemic should not be a partisan issue — that's why even Governor Abbott is now pleading for personal responsibility and backtracking large portions of his re-opening strategy. Dan Patrick and Dan Crenshaw, on the other hand, have become two of the most vocal opponents of common-sense public health precautions. One claims that Dr. Fauci has been "wrong every time on every issue" while telling Texans he would rather perish than see the economy suffer. The other claims he trusts Texans to "do the right thing" by wearing masks while refusing to do so himself and calling Houston public officials "fear mongers" and "tyrants" for implementing common-sense safety measures. In Houston alone, we've broken a new positive case and hospitalization record almost every single day for the past two weeks. People are suffering, and we can't just pretend this isn't happening. But with such mixed messaging from our state's high-profile politicians, we are handicapped in our mission to protect Texans. We can't stay idle while public officials with such large public platforms continue to spread dangerous disinformation that put our lives at more risk.

While these hospitalizations and deaths might just be a number to some, these people are family and friends to us — even some of our own in the medical community. We need clear and

consistent messaging about dealing with the pandemic. We need leaders who listen to the experts and embrace the evidence, while modeling the behavior needed to stop this spread. We need elected officials who don't throw out meaningless platitudes while trying to shift blame to the institutions working to keep us informed and protected.

Please, Congressman Crenshaw. Please, Lt. Governor Patrick. We are tired. We are your neighbors. And we are the medical professionals you claim to represent. We implore you to stop playing politics, stop spreading dangerous disinformation, and start leading by example.

Signed,

Regina Bailey, MD

Liliana Rueda Castrillon, MD

Laura Armstrong, MD, FAAFP

Patricia Hayes, MD

Bindi Naik-Mathuria, MD

Shaina Karabinas, MD

Christina Propst, MD, FAAP

Michelle Dang, MD

Heather Pulaski, MD

Diana Mercado Marmarosh, MD

Nadia Hernandez, MD

Ajanta Patra, MD

Velvet M Patterson, MD

Sana Khan, MD

Elizabeth Nguyen, MD

Veronica Vittone, MD

Rosabelle McConkey, MD, FAAP

Bich-May Nguyen, MD, MPH, FAAFP

Laura Dew, MD

Christina Michaelis, MD

Clara Ward, MD, MSc, FACOG

Pooja Kulkarni, MD

Joyce Kim, MD

Audrey Nath, MD, PhD

Anandita Pal, DO

Carrie Ball, MD

Karen Cress, MD

Shannon Neville Westin, MD, MPH

Esther Sampayo, MD, MPH

Adrienne R. Scruggs, MD, CMO

Boi Tran, MD

Stacy Norrell, MD

Stacie Beckman, MD

Thelma Peralez, MD, FAAP

Ashley Kay Amesbaugh, MD

Diana Schulz, MD

Merrill Lewen, MD

Glendaljaz Bosques, MD, DAAP, FAAPMR

Sandi Rigsby, MD

Maria Bernier, MD

Mary Esther M. Rocha, MD, MPH, FAAP

Christine M Anderson, MD

Michelle Ludwig, MD, MPH, PhD

Yamuna Jaladanki, MD

Tricia Dunn, MD

Stacey L Hall, DO

Vicki Chu, MD

Sidra Younus, MD

Claire McGhee, DO

Kellyn Rielly, DO, MPH, FACOG

Michelle Chong, MD

Amber M Yates, MD, FAAP

Sophie Siddiqi, MD

Chinelo Okoye, MD, FACP

Theresa R. Harring, MD

Traci DeSplinter, MD

Dr. Monica Patel, MD

Munirah Reukauf, MD

Lubna Chaudhry, MD

Aditi Gupta, DO

Nancy Vaughns, DO

Adaeze Okeke, MD

Caneita Creighton, MD

Dona Kim Murphey, MD, PhD

Ivvanee Martinez, MD

Sarwat Makkani, DO

Afreen Pappa, MD

Humera Naqvi, MD

Shaochun Chang-Jackson, MD

Regina Troxell, MD

Brian Wang, MD

Charu Agrawal, MD

Sarah Naeem, MD

Adrian Harvey Mass, MD

Amal Iftikhar, MD, MBA

Brittany Chan, MD, MBA, FAAP

Quratulain J Holley, MD

Antonia L. Way, MD

Namieta Janssen, MD PLLC

Neetee Gadgil, DO

Elizabeth C. Berigan, MD

Nicole Jamison, MD

Judith Chandy, MD

Denise Mayo-Walley, MD

Kathy Shang-Rutledge, MD

Jasmine Sardana, MD, MBA

Maren Y. Fuller, MD, FCAP

Leslie Wilson, MD

Tina Pariani, DO

Natacha Quereshi, DO

Susan Dobbs, MD, MBA, FASA

Cristin Dickerson, MD

Tahrin Siddiqua, MD, FAAP

Gauri Dayal, MD

Monica Kalra, DO, FAAFP

Neha Agrawal, Pharm D

Neelima Tammareddi, MD

Behrouz Zand, MD, MS

Karla Vital, MD

Milena Newhook, DO

Charu Sawhney, DO, MPH

Namita Shiralkar, MD