The deadly COVID-19 pandemic has caused national economic disruption and generated significant 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. Amely, 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 vaccines, including expressing worry that “safety is being sacrificed” 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 clinicians, 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 you in communicating that scientists are leading the way to ensure treatments and vaccines are safe and effective—and in turn—lead the nation to full recovery.

Academy of Health
Aging Life Care Association
Alabama Advocates
Alliance for Aging Research
Alzheimer's Disease International
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Neurology
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association for Anatomists
American Association for Cancer Research
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy
American Chemical Society
American College of Chest Physicians
American College of Gastroenterology
American College of Physicians
American Contracted Society
American Geriatrics Society
American Heart Association
American Medical Association
American Nurses Association
American Pharmacists Association
American Physicians Association
American Society for Cell Biology
American Society of Consultant Pharmacists
American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene
Arthritis Foundation
Association of American Medical Colleges
Association of Black Cardiologists
Association of Jewish Aging Services
Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO)
Auditor and Alley Foundation
Big Cities Health Coalition
Biotechnology Industry Council
Cancer Action Network
Coalition for the Life Sciences
Consortium of Social Science Associations
Coriell Foundation
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Epilepsy Foundation
Everyday Foundation
Friends of Cancer Research
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Global Liver Institute
GOS Foundation for Lung Cancer
Healthrywomen
Hershey-Kew Foundation
Infectious Disease Society of America
Lupus Foundation
Lupus and Allied Diseases Association
March of Dimes
MedStar Health
Mended Hearts
MLC Foundation
National Association of Social Workers (NASW)
National Cancer Coalition
National Communication Association
National Consumer League
National Foundation for Infectious Diseases
National Health Council
National Organization for Rare Disorders
National Organization for Women
National Pharmaceutical Foundation
National Treasury Employees Union
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