

CHARLES SCHUMER
Senate Majority Leader
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Dear Senator Schumer:

We are writing this letter to request the appointment of an independent Presidential Federal Advisory Committee for COVID-19. The United States is currently experiencing an unprecedented surge in COVID-19 cases. The delta variant caught the United States by surprise, despite warnings about its increased transmissibility last June. Variants that may prove even more challenging are arising out of South Africa, Peru and Columbia. Hospitalizations are reaching an all-time high and our healthcare system is on the verge of collapsing, with some patients needing urgent care not able to promptly obtain it. In addition, state reporting of SARS-CoV-2 infections has become erratic. Our country's response to the COVID crisis has been reactive, lacking in transparency, and derailed by infighting and political divides.

Because the original White House Coronavirus Task Force disbanded at the end of the Trump administration, federal advising on the pandemic response is now performed solely by government scientists and physicians. While we recognize the expertise of these federal employees, this arrangement has produced several shortcomings.

1. Public trust of government agencies is in decline. Therefore, policy based solely on advising from federal employees is likely to be met with more resistance than policy formed by an independent committee.
2. There has been a lack of transparency concerning data collection and policy making. It appears that data from the Health Ministry of Israel and Public Health England has been used to guide policy. While data from elsewhere in the world can be useful for forming policy, citizens need to understand how U.S. data forms US policy.
3. The COVID crisis demands timely decisions and actions. We are concerned that because most senior advisors on the coronavirus response team hold leadership positions in federal agencies, advising is mired in bureaucratic stagnation. This was exemplified by the slow authorization process of vaccines in children and the changing recommendations regarding boosters in adults, despite adequate data existing for both of these interventions.

For these reasons, we ask that an independent Presidential Federal Advisory Committee for COVID-19 be reestablished under the Biden administration. Examples of advisory committees in other countries include the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) in the United Kingdom and the National COVID-19 Health and Research Advisory Committee in Australia. Both of these committees strive to provide independent, expert guidance based upon

mainstream science. Science-based guidance, paired with transparency and timely decision making, offers the best path forward for battling the coronavirus and confronting its lasting effects.

Thank you for this consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin T. Kavanagh". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Kevin Kavanagh, MD, MS (Initiative Contact)

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National Nurses United

CC: Senator Mitch McConnell, Senate Republican Leader
Jeff Zients, White House Coronavirus Response Coordinator