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-19 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-19 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-19 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-19 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 a local politician spreading the virus of disinformation with his national platform: **Congressman Dan Crenshaw.**

The COVID-19 pandemic should not be a partisan issue — that's why even Governor Abbott is finally stalling the reopening process and implementing the mask mandates that he unwisely blocked just two short months ago. Dan Crenshaw, on the other hand, has spewed lies for the past four months — minimizing the threat we face and spreading dangerous disinformation for self-indulgent headlines. Crenshaw claims he trusts Texans to "do the right thing" by wearing masks while refusing to do so himself. He called Harris County leaders "fear mongers" and "tyrants" for implementing the same common-sense safety measures he'll now pretend to support. And he's undermined the advice of our public health experts at every turn — enabling millions of his followers to do the same. As the governor changes course, Dan Crenshaw is already attempting to minimize his culpability in this disastrous chapter of Texas history. But the damage is done.

In Houston alone, we've broken new records for positive cases, hospitalizations, and deaths almost every day for weeks on end. Thousands of our neighbors are suffering as hospital and ICU capacity is rapidly overwhelmed, and we did not arrive here overnight. With deliberate

mixed messaging from our state and federal leaders, we were handicapped in our mission to protect Texans from the start.

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. We are tired. We are your neighbors. And we are the medical professionals you claim to represent. We implore you to stop playing politics with our lives, stop spreading dangerous disinformation, and start leading by example.

Signed,

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