Global Science Community in Support of the National Commission on the COVID-19 Pandemic Act

November 29, 2021

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader, US Senate

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader, US Senate

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Republican Leader of the House

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leaders Schumer, McConnell and McCarthy:

We, the undersigned Global Science Community, write to urge Congress to pass the **National Commission on the COVID-19 Pandemic Act (S.3203)**. As scientists involved in multiple areas of COVID-19 research, including disease transmission, global environmental science, biomedical engineering, clinical science, vaccine development, and more, we assert that this legislation will ensure the US is prepared to confront future pandemics. The most recent estimate published in the *Proceedings of National Academy of Sciences* indicates that the likelihood of another global pandemic during our children's lifetime is high. Information gleaned from a National Commission on the COVID-19 Pandemic is urgently needed to strengthen public health systems in the US and abroad to minimize the impact of the next pandemic.

No place on Earth is untouched by the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. In the US alone, almost 1 million of our family members, friends, and neighbors have died from COVID-19. There is fundamental information yet to be evaluated regarding US government response, communication, supply chain coordination, vaccine and drug development and distribution, preparedness, and origins of SARS-CoV-2. We support a systems-based (or holistic) approach to evaluating inefficiencies in response or deficiencies in knowledge that have resulted in sustained global endemicity and hundreds of millions of infected people worldwide.

While appropriate measures deployed within our national borders can reduce the impacts of the virus, the US cannot protect itself by acting unilaterally. A National Commission on the COVID-19 Pandemic is necessary to identify what international surveillance mechanisms or early warning signals are needed to ensure timely management of similar events. A Commission will also identify ways the US can assume a leadership role with the widest possible international participation.

Unprecedented in any previous global epidemic, COVID-19 emerged in a highly connected global society, where information (and misinformation alike) spreads rapidly. In this environment, COVID-19 research results and opinions were often made public and newsworthy prior to rigorous peer review. Public consumers of this unvetted research often misdiagnosed the level of uncertainty such as the variance of an intervention or treatment effect. This partly contributed to the rapid expansion of mistrust between government health authorities and the general public. If this mistrust persists, the next pandemic will likely result in even more deaths, violence and discord, not just within the US borders, but likely worldwide and could become a major issue for US national security.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused many deaths, anguish, isolation, and despair, and still to be assessed economic damage. These impacts are compounded by a cascade of failures in communication and community partnerships. A National Commission on the COVID-19 Pandemic to systematically gather and evaluate comprehensive information is necessary to confront these problems and guide how Congress can act to strengthen our health system and reduce the impact of future pandemics.

Best Regards (organizers),

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