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October 23, 2020

As front line Illinois healthcare professionals caring for those directly affected by COVID-19 and as alumni, faculty, and supporters of Illinois' most storied academic institutions, we strongly oppose [recent statements](#) made by Stanford's Dr. Scott Atlas, that masks are not effective at stopping viral transmission, that children cannot contract or transmit SARS-CoV-2, and that the United States should apply a “herd immunity” strategy to the COVID-19 pandemic. While he hails from the very same Illinois' institutions that we call home, his actions as the white house science advisor belie those institution’s deep-seated commitment to scientific integrity.

First, universal masking is an [effective strategy](#) to [reduce viral transmission](#) in [public](#), in [healthcare settings](#), and [in schools](#). [Universal masking](#) is endorsed by numerous medical associations and [supported by science](#). Additionally, Dr. Anthony Fauci, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease, recommends [“wearing a mask consistently and correctly.”](#)

Second, [children can contract and transmit SARS-CoV-2](#); this [is well-documented in school-aged children](#) and [infants](#). Children are less likely to die from COVID-19 than adults, but [121 children in the United States have succumbed to this disease prior to reopening schools](#).

Third, we join other [health professionals](#), [scientists](#), and [public health experts](#) to strongly denounce the strategy of “herd immunity” as a solution to the COVID-19 pandemic. A herd immunity strategy now, without an effective vaccine, would undoubtedly lead to thousands if not millions of deaths from COVID-19 as well as both a healthcare system and economic collapse.

Dr. Atlas’s statements are false and dangerous, and we believe that our government should embrace the tenets of science and the scientific method. Furthermore, actions and policies based on these falsehoods will result in great human suffering, undermining the hippocratic oath. He takes advantage of the trust afforded to doctors and scholars while espousing false, dangerous statements. It is our duty as physicians and health professionals grounded in evidence to speak out against these false statements that endanger our patients, our families, and our communities. We must believe the science, listen to the experts, and continue recommendations that save lives and communities such as wearing masks and social distancing. Our future is counting on all of us to do our part.