



DAN GELBER
MAYOR

October 30, 2020

The Honorable Ron DeSantis
Governor of Florida
400 S. Monroe Street, Tallahassee FL 32399

Dear Governor DeSantis:

In March, at the onset of this pandemic, I was supportive of your efforts and even complimentary because I believed we shared the identical goal of limiting the spread of the virus in our community. I also believe that, whatever our differences, leaders need to work together in moments such as these. As the months have passed and your policies changed, it is clear that you have adopted a different route. Namely, you are pursuing "herd immunity" as our State strategy to address the virus. Not the conventional herd immunity that arrives through widespread use of a vaccine, but rather the fringe version of herd immunity that occurs when you purposefully allow the virus to spread throughout the community.

You have primarily consulted with Dr. Atlas and the authors of the Great Barrington Declaration. The Declaration is a widely panned theory that theorizes the best way to defeat the virus is to simply open everything up without any government mandated protections while urging the vulnerable to protect themselves.

And you have acted upon their recommendations implementing policies that prevent us from controlling the spread of the disease: you eliminated many social distancing requirements in restaurants and bars; threatened schools with reduced funding if they didn't reopen; and even prohibited local governments like mine from enforcing mask mandates on individuals. You've also reduced availability of tests so that we lose the ability to actually see where and how the disease is spreading.

As if that weren't enough to assure the virus spreads through the herd, it was recently reported that in other parts of the state, you are considering lessening the state's contact tracing effort which only your Department of Health may manage. If you do this, we won't even be trying to reach out to the newly infected or their close contacts to urge tests and quarantines.

I can't imagine a riskier approach. Most residents don't know that Florida is pursuing herd immunity in this manner. Many residents, trusting their Governor, will justifiably believe your loosening of restrictions and roll back of protections was premised on mainstream scientific evidence that the peril is sufficiently diminished to allow them to no longer worry about the virus.

There will be people – even those who are vulnerable – who will unquestionably and unknowingly put themselves at serious risk because you have signaled an all-clear.

Nearly every reputable mainstream health organization and infectious disease expert have fully rejected this type of herd immunity as wrongheaded with the potential to cause even more hospitalizations and death.

The reasons are many and fairly obvious. Dr. Fauci has called this approach “nonsense and risky” and pointed out that it is simply impossible to protect the vulnerable as they comprise at least one-third of our population. Most people over 60 don’t live in isolated communities, they live with their families, or work in offices or schools. The same for people with asthma, diabetes, obesity and other underlying conditions that create more acute outcomes.

In Miami-Dade County, nearly 3,700 residents have already succumbed to the disease and many more have endured challenging hospitalizations. Experts believe if we pursued herd immunity, the number of dead here in Miami Dade County would easily approach 20,000. That would cause more deaths than nearly all the causes of death in our County, more than cancer, heart disease, diabetes, Alzheimer’s, strokes, gun shots, suicides, homicides, and the flu – combined.

Imagine this result reproduced statewide.

No one wants another lockdown, and everybody recognizes the need to reopen. But that is no reason to embrace such a dangerous approach that will likely still set back our economy especially when wearing masks, social distancing and contact tracing don’t in any way limit business openings. Tourists are not going to flock here because we’ve eliminated mask mandates and allowed the disease to spread. People go where they feel safe.

It’s possible local governments like mine and businesses will figure out how to control the spread through workarounds of your policy, but residents should not have to work to protect themselves from their own Governor.

If you are undeterred in pursuing this route, then at least arm our residents with knowledge of what you are doing so that they may protect themselves.

Thank you for your service,



Dan Gelber

CC: Dr. Scott Rivkees
Surgeon General of Florida
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