December 4, 2020

David A. Kessler, MD
Professor of Pediatrics, Epidemiology, Biostatistics
University of California San Francisco

Vivek Murthy, MD, MBA
Former Surgeon General of the U.S.
Member, Biden-Harris Transition Team
Advisory Board

Marcella Nunez-Smith, MD, MHS
Associate Professor of Internal Medicine
Yale University
Associate Dean for Health Equity Research
Yale School of Medicine

Dear Dr. Kessler, Dr. Murthy, and Dr. Nunez-Smith:

On behalf of the Association for Psychological Science (APS), I commend you and President-elect Biden for the establishment of the COVID-19 Advisory Board and your actions to add expertise to the original Board. Please act now to add additional needed expertise in the psychological sciences.

As APS President Shinobu Kitayama wrote on November 17—linked here for your reference—mitigating the virus's spread and impact requires the fullest possible understanding of human psychology and social behavior. Psychological scientists can address the need to encourage individuals to get tested for COVID-19, practice social distancing, urge or mandate the wearing of masks, and navigate misinformation surrounding future vaccines and other health behaviors.

Others share our view, too; the November 30 article in the New York Times titled "The Long Darkness Before Dawn," for instance, notes that psychological science, and behavioral science broadly, can help fight rumors surrounding misinformation, conspiracy theories, and bolster trust in government. As multiple vaccines are now nearing approval, it is wise to have psychological science expertise in place now to be ready to encourage individuals to accept safe, effective vaccines.

I thank you for everything you and your colleagues are doing to fight this pandemic. I would be pleased to recommend psychological scientists for your consideration for the advisory board or provide any other information that would be helpful to you in your work.

Sincerely,

Robert Gropp

Robert Gropp
Executive Director
Association for Psychological Science