

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER SERVICES
COMMISSIONER NICOLE "NIKKI" FRIED

THE CAPITOL

October 27, 2021

The Honorable Ron DeSantis
Governor
The Capitol
400 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Governor DeSantis,

I am writing to formally request that you withdraw your nomination of Joseph Ladapo to be Florida's Surgeon General following several concerning actions that have proven him unfit to serve as Florida's top public health official.

Given Dr. Ladapo's public positions promoting dangerous misinformation when it comes to COVID-19, the efficacy of vaccines and masking, and encouraging risky unproven treatments, your decision to nominate him to direct our state's public health policy in the midst of a pandemic that has taken the lives of nearly 60,000 Floridians was troubling enough. Unfortunately, his continued statements ignoring science and the advice of the broader medical community since his nomination have only further demonstrated these concerns were well-founded, and his undermining of the public health policies needed to keep Floridians safe during this public health crisis should alone result in the withdrawal of his nomination.

Furthermore, the Florida Department of Health (FDOH) that Dr. Ladapo is tasked with leading recently released a long-overdue rule to establish the medical marijuana treatment center application process for Black farmers applying for licensure who are recognized class members of *Pigford v. Glickman* or *In Re Black Farmers Litig.* that more than doubles the application fee and increases the regulatory burdens on only Pigford Class applicants. I have since called on FDOH to rescind and revise this discriminatory rule, and have also called for a state investigation into potential discriminatory intent behind the rulemaking under Dr. Ladapo's leadership. This is yet another disturbing action by your nominee in the short time he's been in Florida that merits reconsideration of his nomination.

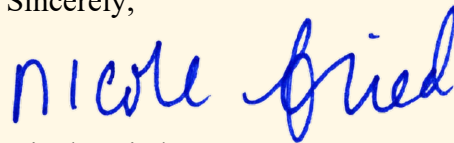
Most recently, continuing this troubling trend, the refusal of Dr. Ladapo to simply wear a face mask at the request of State Senator Tina Polsky – even after she shared she had a serious medical condition – demonstrated an utter lack of respect for the well-being of others that is beyond disqualifying. While Florida Senate President Wilton Simpson responded swiftly to make it clear such mistreatment and disrespect of others in our Capitol would not be tolerated, I am disappointed that you have yet to condemn this reprehensible behavior and rescind Dr. Ladapo's nomination.

While any single one of these occurrences should have been disqualifying on their own, taken as a whole, they are even more damning and deserving of your immediate withdrawal of your nomination of Dr. Ladapo to serve as Florida Surgeon General. Our state's top public health official should be focused on the safety of all Floridians, not prioritizing personal political posturing and promoting discriminatory and

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dangerous policies. It would not only be a disservice to the state, but detrimental to the well-being of our fellow Floridians to move this nomination forward. I hope you will do right by the people of Florida in withdrawing Dr. Ladapo from consideration. If his nomination should move forward, I will urge the Senate to reject Dr. Ladapo's confirmation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "nicole fried". The signature is written in a cursive, lowercase style.

Nicole Fried
Commissioner of Agriculture

cc: The Honorable Wilton Simpson, President, Florida Senate