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Congress of the United States
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July 15, 2020

The Honorable Alex M. Azar II
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Azar:

I write to express my grave concern with the recent treatment of one of the most highly-regarded officials in your department, Dr. Anthony S. Fauci, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. Despite Dr. Fauci's exemplary service and expertise, he has been the target of recent campaign-style opposition research attacks launched by other administration officials as well as a polemical op-ed against him penned by Dr. Peter Navarro PhD, the President's lead trade advisor, which *USA Today* published last night.¹ Beyond Dr. Fauci's essential role in our national efforts to overcome the pandemic, and the significance of these attacks on him on their own, I'm deeply concerned about the potential chilling effect these efforts will have on other public health leaders.

As you are aware, Dr. Fauci has proven invaluable in the fight against COVID-19. His decades of experience, which have included groundbreaking research and service under six presidents, set him apart as an eminently qualified public official to lead us through this crisis.² The American people have furthermore come to count on his straightforward analyses in this time of such great uncertainty. It is for these reasons that we find recent attacks on Dr. Fauci by the White House so deeply inappropriate and worry that they are a prelude to his imminent firing.

Just yesterday, you spoke in support of Dr. Fauci, his experience and his contributions, notably saying:

"I've known Dr. Fauci and worked with him for close to 20 years now as a friend and colleague. He is a very trusted adviser of the president and myself and the vice president. He contributes his ideas. He'll continue to contribute his ideas and views. The president builds teams where each of us provide our inputs from our perspective, and his job as president is to take those inputs and the different perspectives, de-conflict them and come about with what he believes in the direction he's going to provide for the country. But Dr. Fauci, as the president has made clear, is one of his trusted advisers and will remain so. Nobody should be concerned. Dr. Fauci is and will remain a trusted adviser of the president and myself."³

But despite your words of confidence and reassurance with regard to Dr. Fauci's role in our nation's efforts against the pandemic, multiple media outlets reported over the weekend receiving an "opposition research" style list of incorrect and misleadingly edited statements made by Dr. Fauci in the early days of the pandemic.⁴ Over the weekend, White House Deputy Chief of Staff Dan Scavino posted a cartoon, included below, depicting "Dr. Faucet" releasing a cold stream of public health recommendations, sweeping Uncle Sam down the drain.

¹ Navarro, Peter. *USA Today*. "[Anthony Fauci has been wrong about everything I have interacted with him on](#)" July 14, 2020.

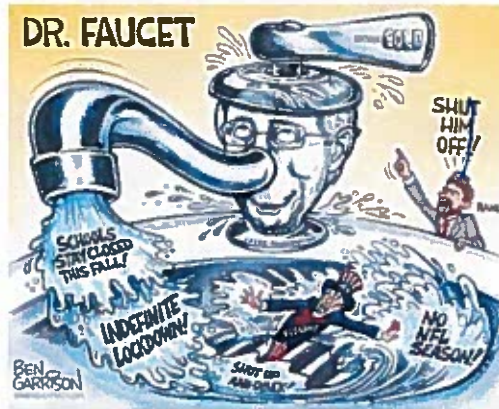
² Specter, Michael. *The New Yorker*. "[How Anthony Fauci Became America's Doctor](#)" April 20, 2020

³ Pearson, Rick. *The Chicago Tribune*. "[HHS Secretary Alex Azar says Dr. Fauci remains a 'trusted adviser' and blames spike in cases on personal behavior, particularly among younger people](#)" July 14, 2020

⁴ Haberman, Maggie. *The New York Times*. "[Trump Aides Undercut Fauci as He Speaks Up on Virus Concerns](#)" July 12, 2020

Daniel Scavino Jr. 1d · 🌐

Sorry, Dr. Fauci! At least you know if I'm going to disagree with a colleague, such as yourself, it's done publicly — and not cowardly, behind journalists with leaks. See you tomorrow!



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Tuesday evening brought the most brazen attack on Dr. Fauci from within the administration with *USA Today's* publication of Peter Navarro's op-ed titled, "Anthony Fauci has been wrong about everything I have interacted with him on."⁵ This attack on a member of the same administration, is completely unprecedented and represents an apparent effort by opponents of Dr. Fauci with no discernible qualifications in medicine or public health to assassinate his expertise and credibility because they disagree with his recommendations.

While it is nearly incomprehensible that administration officials are devoting desperately needed time and energy to personal, political attacks on Dr. Fauci during a pandemic and economic crisis, the chilling effect these attacks could have represents a far greater public danger. As you know, there are thousands of other public health officials across the federal government who have now witnessed the lengths to which administration officials will go to demonize an expert they disagree with and those public health officials are far more vulnerable than Dr. Fauci. These officials who now more than ever need to advise the American people either directly through the media or via testimony before Congress must not feel or be muzzled by the White House.

Differences of opinion over policy, both public and private, are nothing new in the federal government but the attacks on Dr. Fauci represent an unprecedented, political-style campaign to attack a career public servant rather than to directly resolve differences of opinion and policy as we have throughout our history.

In light of these attacks, as Secretary of Health and Human Services, I urge you to defend Dr. Fauci against the threat of his unjust firing, and just as importantly, I urge you to publicly denounce these attacks on Dr. Fauci and against any other public health official who would similarly provide their expertise for the sake of our country.

Sincerely,

Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress

⁵ Navarro, Peter. *USA Today*. "[Anthony Fauci has been wrong about everything I have interacted with him on](#)" July 14, 2020.