

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL ONLY

16 December 2013

Mitchell Benzine  
Majority Counsel  
Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic  
U.S. House of Representatives  
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**Re: Misleading statements made by lawyers acting on behalf of Dr. Francis S. Collins on our Cochrane review.**

*Dear Sir, thank you for your prompt reply and inviting me to comment. Your citation of our review's content conclusions is correct. However, you might want to consider the [November 2020](#) version (its third update), which reached the same conclusions as its 2023 update. I am the primary author of the 2006 protocol and the five review versions.*

*On the topic of mask effectiveness and safety, decision-makers discarded the principles of Evidence-Based Medicine almost overnight, carrying out a "race to the bottom" of the evidence quality pyramid. As you noted in your report, they then adopted wavering stances, continuously flip-flopping. They used mathematical models and poor-quality observational studies, coupled with personal attacks, persecution of trialists, lobbying and censorship, to inflict evidence-free interventions on the American, Canadian, Australian, and European populations.*

*I have reviewed the evidence since 2006 and can state that at present none of the physical interventions decision-makers flip-flopped to introduce have a solid evidence base except for hand washing, which leads to a small but significant decrease in symptomatic acute respiratory illness.*

*As you noted, the CDC relied on several very low-quality studies to justify decisions already made.*

*Their biggest indictment was the refusal to carry out large randomised trials to explore further the evidence of what may work, in what mix, and in which populations before, during, and after the pandemic.*

*In commending your work, I remain happy to discuss and clarify this and other issues arising from your report and leave you with the words of a founding father of your Country: 'The liberties of a people never were, nor ever will be, secure when the transaction of their rulers may be concealed from them.'*

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Thomas Jefferson".

*References:*

*Jefferson T, Dooley L, Ferroni E, Al-Ansary LA, van Driel ML, Bawazeer GA, Jones MA, Hoffmann TC, Clark J, Beller EM, Glasziou PP, Conly JM. Physical interventions to interrupt or reduce the spread of respiratory viruses. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2023, Issue 1. Art. No.: CD006207. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD006207.pub6.*

*Jefferson T, Del Mar CB, Dooley L, Ferroni E, Al-Ansary LA, Bawazeer GA, van Driel ML, Jones MA, Thorning S, Beller EM, Clark J, Hoffmann TC, Glasziou PP, Conly JM. Physical interventions to interrupt or reduce the spread of respiratory viruses. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2020, Issue 11. Art. No.: CD006207. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD006207.pub5.*