



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 28, 2020

For Information, contact: Jody Kass, PPC Executive Director: 704-412-4506 x101 Jkass@plantpurecommunities.org

Groups Call on Gov. Abbott to Fight COVID Hospitalizations Via Data-Driven Nutrition Strategy

Today, [a letter](#) was released by the nonprofit PlantPure Communities in which seventeen groups from across Texas called on Governor Abbott to implement a data-driven nutrition strategy to assist with maximizing the opening of the Texas economy while reducing public health risks. The groups represent over 4,000 Texans.

Pointing to commentaries ([Part 1](#) & [Part 2](#)) by biochemist/nutrition researcher and Cornell Professor Dr. T. Colin Campbell, the groups made three requests of Governor Abbott:

- During press briefings, speak about the **diet-related comorbidities** (degenerative diseases like diabetes, heart disease, obesity, hypertension) that increase COVID-19 hospitalization and fatality risk for Texans generally, and which disproportionately impact communities of color and other underserved neighborhoods.
- Speak about the power of a whole food, plant-based diet (vegetables, fruits, whole grain, beans, peas, lentils and nuts) to defend against the worst effects of COVID-19.
- Publicly pledge to eat these foods for 10 days, thereby encouraging others to take these crucial first steps toward healing and doing their part to keep the economy open.

According to Dr. Campbell's commentaries, there is evidence that suggests that switching to a healthy plant-based diet would not only decrease chronic disease risk, and sometimes reverse these conditions, but also increase the production of COVID-19 antibodies. And, there is ample information showing that this nutritional effect may begin in a matter of days, enough time for people who are not yet infected to strengthen their immune systems. **Nelson Campbell**, PPC Founder and son of Dr. Campbell, said "*For too long, powerful economic interests have gotten in the way of communicating to the public the health and environmental benefits of a plant-based diet. Now we are suffering through a pandemic, made worse by nutritionally-caused chronic conditions. It's time we let people know that a diet of whole, plant-based foods can help defend against the worst effects of COVID-19.*"

By addressing diet-related comorbidities while also strengthening immunity, a nutrition strategy would reduce strain on our hospital system and thereby improve our ability to keep the economy open once it is restarted. **Dr. T. Colin Campbell**, biochemist/nutrition researcher and Cornell professor who serves as an advisor to PlantPure Communities, said: "*It is well past time for the discipline of nutrition, properly defined, to be made available to the public through appropriate policy instruments and to training program curricula for primary caretakers (physicians, nurses) within the medical profession. It also is well past time that primary health care providers be properly reimbursed for counseling in the use of nutrition as a means of prevention and treatment of illnesses and diseases.*"

Patricia Thomson, leader of the 290-member Plant Powered Plano Pod, said, “As the CEO of two Charter Schools it is imperative that we do all we can to protect the health and wellbeing of our children. Emphasizing the impact of a healthy diet on the immune fighting response of our children is one way to ensure their health and wellbeing.”

Jacquelyn Rummel, leader of the 190-member McKinney Pure Plants Pod, said, “My husband and I both contracted COVID-19 in February. We felt terrible but did not develop the respiratory issues or high fever that seem to be associated with the virus. We are in our late 60's and generally good health but still suffer from weakness, muscle aches and fatigue from the disease. We've been plant-based since 2017 and I believe it was our diet that prevented the disease doing more damage or being potentially fatal.”

Rizwan H. Bukhari MD, co-leader of the 1,600-member Plant-Based DFW Pod in Dallas, said, “As a vascular surgeon, on a daily basis I treat patients with atherosclerosis, diabetes, hypertension, and obesity - the risk factors that increase a person's likelihood of death related to COVID-19. My diabetic and renal failure patients are also immunocompromised - another factor that can lead to death from coronavirus. It is not surprising that the treatment and lifestyle I promote for my patients to recover, improve, and even reverse their disease - a whole food, plant-based diet - is the same approach that will help reduce the risk of dying from COVID-19. We are in crisis mode in Dallas. My 2 main hospitals are now COVID-19 hospitals. We have shut down all elective services to devote employee resources to caring for COVID patients. The hospital census is 50-70% COVID and the ICUs are full with all ventilators in use. We are even setting up and managing ventilators outside of the ICU setting. As Chief of Staff of my primary institution, a Baylor facility, I am troubled by this acceleration of events. We are not winning this battle, not even stemming the tide. I am also disturbed by the secondary intangible effects - a lack of access to care for those who need it. Patients are staying away from the hospital and not getting important life and limb saving procedures. I have had several patients have strokes, lose their legs, and even die when I believe that would not have been their fate had they had more timely access to care. As this crisis progresses we will even have COVID-19 patients dying at home when we are unable to provide them space in the hospitals for treatment. So, it becomes clear that plant-based nutrition should be a central focus of our strategies to deal with COVID-19.”

Donna Spencer, leader of the PLANTifull Fare NW Houston Pod, said, “Research has proven that eating a whole food, plant-based diet provides essential vitamins and minerals, phytochemicals and antioxidants that help keep your body in balance so your immune system can function at its best.”

Karoline Mueller, leader of the 170-member Bayou City Beet Pod, said, “A whole food, plant-based diet has the power to reverse chronic diseases, nourish our mind, and optimize the immune system so we can fight off viruses like COVID-19. This eating pattern also has the power to rejuvenate our communities, heal the environment, and transform our world.”

Vicki Spradling, leader of the 210-member Get Healthy Seguin Guadalupe County Pod, said, “We must make it clear to everyone that a strong immune system is the best defense against COVID-19 and the best way to improve our immune system is with good nutrition. A whole food, plant-based diet provides the optimal nutrition.”

Anita Amit, leader of the 150-member Green & Fit Frisco Pod, said, “All human viral infections originate from animals. These infections are only getting more prevalent with the increase in animal farming. Plants possess powerful properties to prevent, cure and reverse various health conditions by building and boosting a strong immune system. Eating a whole food, plant-based diet is therefore as valuable of a defense mechanism as distancing, hygiene and masks.”

Nicole Ochoa, leader of the NourishSA Pod in San Antonio, said, “Parents in Texas are waking up to the long term ill health effects on our children from the standard American diet. The Academy of Pediatrics now recommends children as young as nine years old be tested for high cholesterol, due to the growing epidemic of obesity and type 2 diabetes in children. In the current pandemic, COVID-19 is shown to be a severe threat to individuals with underlying conditions, so it is imperative that we give our children the best defense against this virus.”

Kathy Rodriguez, leader of the Plant Strong & Courageous Pod, said, “I personally witnessed the positive effects of a whole food, plant-based diet I was able to control my rheumatoid arthritis to reduce flare ups and avoid prescription medications. My mother stopped and reversed the growth of breast cancer tumors. WFPB eating has been proven to prevent and reverse certain diseases.”

Lisa Arnold, leader of the 240-member PlantED in Fort Bend Pod, said, “My family and I have personally experienced the benefits of a whole food, plant-based diet to improve health and reverse the most common degenerative diseases of today. It's so powerful, why not share this information with everyone?”

Joanna Kline, leader of PBnJ of Corpus Christi Pod, said, “Our state and local leaders have successfully emphasized the importance of protective measures yet not much has been mentioned of the crucial role of nutrition in creating resilient health. It is imperative that the protective and restorative benefits of whole food, plant-based nutrition as a first line defense against infection and chronic disease is discussed.”

Lori Whitworth, leader of the Phytophilous Pod in Rainbow, said, “Whole food, plant-based foods should be promoted by our state. These foods offer significant health protections, improve resistance to disease, promote the economic livelihood of small production farmers, and are the most economical way to provide superior nutrition to those in need. Actively promoting these foods will save Texas taxpayers money on many fronts.”

Ken Kanagaki, leader of the 300-member Get Healthy San Antonio Pod, said, “We have not had a cold since we became whole food, plant-based in 2012!” Co-leader **Charlotte Martin**, added, “Nothing tastes as good as healthy feels! We have partnered with San Antonio College Eco Center to promote sustainability in gardening and eating.”

Lisa Sims, leader of the Plants in The Woods Pod in The Woodlands, said, “Research continues to show that in order to restore and improve the health of our world, it is necessary to incorporate a plant-based diet into the lives of every generation.”

Jinell Ecby, leader of the Fit For Life Pod in Katy, said, “Change your diet, change your life.”

Kayla Robinson, leader of the Vegan With a Reason Pod in Little Elm, said, “Let FOOD be thy medicine and MEDICINE be thy food.”

J. Kent Marsh, co-leader of the 170-member Harmony N Houston Pod, said, “We need to add whole food, plant-based nutrition to our arsenal of weapons to improve the health of our community. Eating the standard American diet (SAD), I developed heart disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and gout. Three years after changing to a whole food, plant-based diet, I have no signs of any chronic disease, no medications, better immunity, and a higher quality of life. **Susan Marsh**, the leader of the Pod added, “True research-based nutritional knowledge is power over the COVID-19 virus and all other diseases. I credit my health and my life to a whole food, plant-based diet. Over the past three years I have reversed my heart disease and eliminated

*all medications for blood pressure and cholesterol.” Pod Co-leaders **Louis and Jana Danna** added, “Every day thousands of people in Texas are being hospitalized and hundreds are dying at the hands of the COVID-19 virus. The majority of those hospitalizations and deaths could be avoided with higher levels of nutrition, which boosts each individual’s immune system. Unfortunately there is NO ONE in public office and NO ONE in the media stepping up to the plate to inform the general population as to how they can protect themselves and their loved ones by boosting their immune system with eating high nutrition, plant-based meals. The more plant-based meals consumed, the fewer people will need to be hospitalized and the fewer people will die. This does not require a massive science project to prove, this is anchored in common sense and common knowledge. If NO ONE in public office or the media has enough courage to bring this important message to the general public then we are truly in a sad state of affairs. This is all about saving lives.”*

*The PlantPure Communities (PPC) Pod Network is the backbone of a global grassroots movement of people participating in independent local groups, called “Pods” who promote the evidence-based benefits of whole food, plant-based nutrition. To date, more than 250,000 people participate in the PPC Pod Network in 29 countries. PPC is a 501c3 nonprofit organization.

###