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## **Letter of Support for Dr. Hasan Gokal - National Medical and Public Health Organizations**

**To:**

March 26, 2021

Edward Anderson, SHRM-CP  
Director of Human Resources  
Harris County Public Health and Environmental Services

Jennifer Kiger, MPH  
Chief of the Office of Public Health Preparedness & Response  
Harris County Public Health

Michael McClendon  
Director, Office of Public Health Preparedness & Response  
Harris County Public Health

We, the undersigned medical associations and health and human rights organizations, stand in solidarity with Dr. Hasan Gokal and condemn his inappropriate dismissal and the continued pursuit of criminal charges against him. The Houston community has been negatively impacted by the involuntary termination of Dr. Gokal by the Harris County Public Health Department. On December 29th 2020, Dr. Gokal administered ten doses of the COVID-19 vaccine to eligible Texan residents. These vaccine doses would have expired had he not administered them. His actions complied with the Texas Department of State Health Services' explicit instructions not to waste vaccine doses. The Harris County Public Health Department fired Dr. Gokal for allegedly taking doses of the vaccine off-site, and the Harris County District Attorney's Office charged him with theft.

Our organizations represent physicians, public health professionals and other health workers committed to improving the health and well-being of all Americans and supporting health providers who are fulfilling their obligations. Dr. Gokal's actions helped vulnerable members of the Texas community including the elderly, and those with pre-existing conditions.



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These individuals were high risk and also had difficulty accessing the vaccine. In fact, by vaccinating eligible Texans, Dr. Gokal helped every Harris County resident since the pandemic has shown us how interconnected all of us are and his actions brought us one step closer to herd immunity.

The Harris County Public Health Department and the District Attorney's accusations and charges against Dr. Gokal are an affront to healthcare workers and an egregious miscarriage of justice. The comments made by Dr. Gokal's employer questioning the ethnic names of the vaccine recipients also highlight the racist undertones of this incident. At a time when the country is reeling from the throes of a deadly pandemic that has disproportionately affected minorities, there is a crucial need for equitable access and distribution of vaccines. Dr. Gokal is on the frontlines of the fight against this pandemic and took heroic measures to ensure qualified residents of Harris County got the vaccine they needed and no vaccine doses were lost. He should be applauded for his efforts and not ostracized for his sincere commitment to the public health of his county. Dr. Gokal's actions adhered to the principle of "Do No Harm" and he upheld his hippocratic oath to safeguard the health and well being of everyone. Recently the Texas Medical Board also cleared Dr. Gokal of any wrong-doing, which further emphasizes the outrageous nature of these allegations.

As organizations committed to the public health of this nation, we are deeply concerned that these repercussions against Dr. Gokal will create fear amongst physicians and other health professionals across the nation, increasing barriers to vaccine access. The downstream impact may lead to wasting of vaccines rather than administering them to deserving candidates. At this critical time, we need to implement processes that safeguard vaccine doses and ensure vaccine access for all deserving populations. These values were exemplified by Dr. Gokal as were the Oregon health workers who ended up giving the COVID-19 vaccine to fellow passengers when stuck in a snowstorm on the highway in late January. By their own admission they adhered to the number one unspoken rule for COVID-19 vaccines which is "nothing gets wasted." Dr. Gokal also appropriately followed that rule and the Texas Department of State Health Services' guidelines and therefore should be commended.



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Our organizations stand with the Texas Medical Association and the Harris Medical Society in applauding, not penalizing physicians who are working hard to avoid wasting vaccines, like Dr. Gokal. We condemn the continued persecution of Dr. Hasan Gokal by the Harris County District Attorney's Office, and the Harris County Public Health Department's inappropriate termination of this dedicated public health official. We **strongly urge the Harris County District Attorney's Office to stop pursuing charges against Dr Gokal.** Furthermore, we demand that the Harris County Public Health Department issue a public apology and reinstate Dr. Gokal into his position.

Sincerely,

American Medical Student Association (AMSA)

American Muslim Health Professionals (AMHP)

Doctors For America

Imamia Medics International (IMI)

Physicians for Human Rights (PHR)