

Viewpoint: Anti-vax extremists bully public health officials. We can't let them win

Since mid-April, [27 state and local health leaders](#) across 13 states have resigned, retired, or been fired, some citing threats and pressure from outside groups.

Public health officers are trained professionals with the expertise to protect the public from preventable injury and death. During outbreaks, they have the authority to act to halt an outbreak from spreading. Unfortunately, extremists who oppose almost every measure to halt the coronavirus pandemic, including stay-at-home orders, wearing masks, contact tracing, and vaccination are engaging in personal attacks on public health officers while too many elected leaders tacitly allow this bullying.

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Politicians who politicize the coronavirus pandemic are emboldening extremists who target public health officers like Dr. Nichole Quick, the chief health officer of Orange County, Calif., and Dr. Amy Acton, director of the Ohio Health Department, both of whom recently resigned their public health posts. At an Orange County Board of Supervisors meeting, an anti-vaccine extremist threatened Quick and [announced her home address](#)... In Ohio, [armed demonstrators](#) marched outside Acton's home. These missions were straightforward: Bully public health officials into supporting their demands.

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The extremists are [crowing about their success](#) in forcing the resignations of Quick and Acton, and are planning to target more public health officers.

We cannot allow this attack on public health to succeed. Public safety demands that public health officials must make recommendations based on science and free from intimidation.

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