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For Immediate Release
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ICYMI: Rep. Skidmore and Florida Doctors Slam Marco Rubio And Ron DeSantis For Playing Politics During Recent COVID Surge

Health care workers across Florida have seen firsthand how Marco Rubio and Ron DeSantis have prioritized their self-serving political agendas over an effective response to the recent surge in COVID cases across the state.

Yesterday the Florida Democratic Party hosted a virtual press conference with Rep. Kelly Skidmore and doctors from across the state who have treated COVID patients to discuss how Rubio and DeSantis have made the ongoing public health crisis worse. The panelists recounted how Rubio and DeSantis were more focused on scoring political points than keeping people safe while hospitalizations and COVID-related deaths in Florida reached all-time highs in August.

Highlights from the press conference are below and a full recording is available [here](#).

"In the vacuum created by Ron DeSantis, Senator Marco Rubio has not stepped up or spoken out to protect Floridians. In fact, he voted against \$1,400 checks for Floridians, and opposed funding for vaccine distribution, COVID relief for schools, first responders, and small businesses. Governor DeSantis has spent the past month attacking public school boards that want to implement their own public health measures. Instead of holding events to promote vaccines, he's defunding school boards who disobey him...What we've experienced in the last month is the result of our leaders failing to do their jobs and take responsibility for Floridians' lives," said **Rep. Kelly Skidmore**.

"As this most recent surge was getting under way, Governor DeSantis came here to Tampa General to host a press conference...He didn't come upstairs and look at our overflowing ICU and see the chaos that was ensuing in our hospital...he comfortably stood in the press room and spoke out against masking...He's following a political agenda, and it's at the expense of the lives and the health of Floridians. [...]"

We need our elected officials to step up and set the example...We need someone to step up and lead, not be absent, not be campaigning for the next election

cycle...This has never been this bad over the last 18 months," said **Dr. Jennifer Caputo-Seidler, a hospital internist from Tampa.**

"I practice preventative medicine and it's my job to try to convince people to get the vaccine, and right now we are in a leadership vacuum. With Senator Rubio and Governor DeSantis not really speaking out in terms of what people need to be doing with the vaccine and with masks, it puts us at a huge disadvantage...By not being pro-vaccine - vocally and strongly pro-vaccine and pro mask, [DeSantis and Rubio] are leading to this vacuum where people are getting their information from absolutely ridiculous sources. And that's what's bound to happen when our leaders aren't stepping up," said **Dr. Dawn Sherling, an internist from Palm Beach County.**

"This particular spike starting in July has been made so much harder by both the neglect from officials as well as the willful fighting to recognize that we have any sort of emergency...If they came out at every event with [a mask] on, it's a real sign to the community that we're in crisis, but instead they choose not to do that." said **Dr. Jennifer Cowart, a Jacksonville hospital internist.**

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