

Remarks Concerning Proposed Resolution of the Leelanau County Board of
Commissioners, February 9, 2021
Michael Hertz, MD, MPH

- Good morning, my name is Dr. Michael Hertz; I am a licensed physician in the State of Michigan; I have a teaching appointment at Wayne State University School of Medicine and I possess a Masters Degree in Public Health from the University of Michigan; I am a homeowner in Benzie County.
- This proposed resolution is based on the 'Great Barrington Declaration' (I will refer to it by the acronym 'GBD') that was released in October 2019 after being introduced at an event sponsored by the American Institute for Economic Research, a conservative think tank in Great Barrington, MA. AIER is funded in part through a corporate investment firm with holdings in major fossil fuel companies and to other institutions backed by Koch and the fossil fuel industry; AIER is **NOT** a scientific or medical organization.
- The GBD advocates a strategy for combatting the COVID-19 pandemic by abandoning proven and well-established public health principles for mitigation and control of an infectious respiratory pandemic. This would then allow a highly infectious, potentially lethal virus to spread unabated through a population, infecting enough individuals to produce so-called 'herd immunity,' while somehow protecting the most vulnerable members of the population from contracting COVID-19. The GBD and by inference your resolution does not specify what measures would or should be taken to protect those vulnerable people, nor who would be responsible for doing so nor how they would be funded.
- This would inevitably result in far more deaths given the relatively high case-fatality rate of 2.6% attendant to the disease.
- As the resolution states, we have indeed begun the process of vaccinating the population against COVID-19, but due to the negligent incompetence of the previous federal administration, as of last Friday only 4% of Benzie residents and only 3.5% Leelanau residents have received both vaccine doses.
- The GBD has been signed by more than 35,000 people, some self-identified as so-called scientists and clinicians, many of whom were found to be frauds with names like "Dr. Johnny Bananas" or "Professor Cominic Dummings", and whose identities were never vetted.
- The 'Great Barrington Declaration' is **NOT** the product of scientific public health research. It was released without any data or evidence and has been denounced by the vast majority of national and international experts in public health
- In direct response to the release of the GBD, the Infectious Diseases Society of America called the policy "inappropriate, irresponsible and ill-informed. Community immunity, a goal of vaccine campaigns, should NEVER come at the cost of planned exposure to infection of

...additional people. To assert that stepping away from the vigilance needed to control the spread of this [novel] coronavirus and that abdication of efforts to control a pandemic is a “compassionate approach” is profoundly misleading” and I would add it is disingenuous, unethical and immoral.

- The ‘Declaration’ has been repudiated and condemned by the American Public Health Association, the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, the World Health Organization, the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security at the Bloomberg School of Public Health, experts at the George Washington University Milken Institute School of Public Health, and the Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health, and the University of Michigan School of Public Health just to name a few.
- Just last month preliminary research findings released from the University of Michigan School of Public Health using data from the Michigan Disease Surveillance System, Oxford Coronavirus Government Response Tracker and the Johns Hopkins University Coronavirus Database revealed that Michigan Governor Whitmer’s ‘Pause to Save Lives’ instituted over Thanksgiving and Christmas likely prevented over 100,000 cases of COVID-19. This translates into approximately 2,600 Michigander deaths averted. Abandoning public health control measures does not serve the public and will lead to more Michiganders dying.
- Lastly, I wish to address the use of the clearly and overtly xenophobic and racist terms in the resolution. There is no such virus as the “Wuhan” virus, and using this term is intentionally inflammatory and deliberately creates bias against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. It puts them at risk of bullying, harassment and hate crimes, and fosters a climate of intolerance, bigotry and hatred. There is no place for this anywhere in northern Michigan.
- A resolution such as this serves no valid public health purpose, is at best an embarrassment to Leelanau County and should be withdrawn immediately.