

Dear Montgomery County Council,

My name is Katja Harper, I am a Montgomery County Resident in Derwood Maryland, and am writing to express my concerns about the Approval of Executive Order No. 87-20, COVID-19 Local Order – Amending and Restating Order dated June 19, 2020. It is my understanding that this order contains an additional restriction on when food service establishments are allowed to serve alcohol, and while I appreciate our executive's concern for Montgomery County citizens' public health, I don't feel that the additional restrictions are meaningful or helpful. Rather, they appear to be needlessly burdensome to our already struggling business community.

The order stipulates that food service establishments may not serve alcohol past 10:00PM. However, there is no evidence that resident any county or state are at higher risk for contracting COVID by consuming alcoholic beverages at a particular time of day. COVID is equally contagious regardless of what time of day it is transmitted, and in absence of any evidence to the contrary, this portion of the order simply does not make sense. One could argue that there may be more people congregating in certain areas at different times of day, however, the peak hours for most food service establishments are between 6PM and 10PM, not 10PM and later. In fact most food service establishments in Montgomery County are closed by 10PM. This can be confirmed by a quick perusal of Montgomery County restaurants' hours on Yelp:

https://www.yelp.com/search?find_desc=Restaurants&find_loc=Montgomery%20County%2C%20MD

. In light of this information, it would seem pointless to place additional restrictions on businesses during hours when their customer traffic is waning. Additionally, the capacity restrictions already in place ensure that only a safe number of patrons are able to enter a food establishment at any given time. As long as capacity limits are followed, there is no additional danger to consuming alcohol after 10PM after most customers have already gone home.

I would also like to voice concern over the additional restrictions on youth sports that are being proposed. Currently, our county's young people are permitted to participate in “high-risk” sports. It is not clear why this guidance is being revised. According to the CDC, fewer than 100 children nationwide of perished from COVID-19. This is three times less than the average number of children who die from the flu each year. If our children are allowed to participate in “high risk” sports during flu season, which is statistically more dangerous to them, then it follows logically that they should also be allowed to play these sports in spite of COVID, to which young people are largely immune.

Finally, I would like to object to the fact that information on this hearing was first shared on Montgomery County's social media page less than 1 day before the hearing was scheduled. When I clicked on the link to submit a testimony, the county webpage informed me that residents must submit testimony at least 2 days before the hearing. As the announcement for the hearing was only posted 15 hours prior, this was impossible, and is an indirect suppression of our citizens' voices, particularly considering we are currently banned from attending public hearings in person. I hope you will consider giving sufficient advance notice of such important deliberations in the future, and appreciate your consideration of this opinion.

Respectfully,