

Testimony on COVID-19 Local Order Amending and Restating Order Dated  
September 22, 2020  
By Catherine Tunis, Takoma Park, 11/4/2020

I am generally opposed to any changes in our Public health Orders that loosen restrictions that are designed to keep people safe. CoVID-19 is extremely contagious and extremely dangerous to those who become ill, especially older adults and people with underlying conditions. To paraphrase my Mom, "if you don't have your health, you have nothing."

I totally understand the economic pressures to open business and also provide entertainment to those who have had very limited activities. But Public Health must NOT be compromised. Rates of infection in the County are higher than they have ever been. Now is the time to tighten restrictions further, not loosen them.

The Hearing notice was often unclear about what was proposed, requiring research and comparisons with the September 22, 2020 Order. It would have been better to provide a track changes document showing proposed changes. Nevertheless, I offer the following specific comments:

1. The proposal for Childcare facilities is completely unclear. Are you keeping the June requirements or cutting them by 50%? Opening of schools and childcare seems to be operating as "silent spreader" events in our community and must be run in the strictest manner possible with the most cleaning and spacing requirements. Special attention should be paid to ventilation—with maximum outdoor air and MERV 13 and 14 filters for indoor spaces wherever possible.
2. Escape rooms should NOT be opened. That is a nightmare scenario—locked in a room with other people who might be infectious.
3. Good idea to require no drinking of alcohol after 10 pm, not just no sales.
4. Good idea to enhance information collection for contact tracing.
5. Strongly disagree with allowing alcohol sales for establishments w no citations for only 60 days. You haven't been inspecting every establishment every day, so you are taking the establishment's word. Better to limit to those w no history of violations.
6. I strongly disagree with the proposal to change the trigger for suspension from 3 days to 7 days.
7. Playgrounds that cannot comply with cleaning requirements must close, not just post signs. Signs will not stop the virus!
8. Flag football should still be considered a high-risk sport.
9. Gathering size restrictions should NOT be loosened to allow parents, guardians, or immediate family to attend. The size restrictions are based on the concept of lowering risk by lowering the number of people interacting. Children, parents, guardians, and family members are all potential vectors! There is no magical virus shield for them.
10. Outdoor ice rinks should not be allowed to open. Size restrictions are a good idea, but these facilities still typically have indoor warming areas where people would be in close quarters and at high risk of transmitting the virus.

Again, safety must come first. Once we defeat this virus, we will have time to engage in social and economic activities without fear. Public health must be your first responsibility.

Thank you.