

Good afternoon.

My name is Kevin Dougherty, and I'm here today to both testify on Executive Order 122-20, and request assistance in securing a safe and appropriate education for our children.

To start, each and every council member should be very worried about the optics of your vote today. With each passing day, it becomes more and more clear that our local leadership, in the council, in the executive office, and at the board of education, do not care about working families or children.

Today, you are considering allowing escape rooms to open, but to limit child care. To allow bars to stay open late. Indoors. While people drink without their masks. But nothing to help facilitate a return to the classroom. With this vote, you will be forcing working families to make impossible decisions when they lose their spot in child care facilities, while allowing more dangerous and completely optional entertainment behavior to continue.

You've allowed outdoor music to resume. Breweries to overflow with people, yet you've done nothing to help the 160,000 children that are not receiving an appropriate education.

Honestly, ask yourselves, are escape rooms more important to our community than childcare? Are bars more important to Montgomery County families than their children's education?

So today, I ask you: where do your priorities lie? We know that families are not a priority for County Executive Elrich; this executive order is proof enough of that. We know that the Board of Education does not care about the children; their unattainable return metrics are proof enough of that. But today, will you find the courage to stand up for working families? To help the tens of thousands of struggling families across the county.

You have an opportunity to do the right thing. Reject Executive Order 122-20. And in doing so, send a message to the executive, and to the entire county, that we must put our families and children first.

For 7 months, hardworking families have put the health of the community first. We've followed the rules to protect our at-risk neighbors, and it has worked. Our county has done a much better job than the rest of the country in containing the virus.

But now, we must ask for that same compassion, empathy and sacrifice for another at-risk cohort: families with children. The status quo can no longer continue. Families need childcare. Children need school. And today, you can vote for families and children. Let it be known that families in this county are not alone. We've been abandoned by the Board of Education, Dr. Gayles, and by County Executive Elrich. With your vote, you can let it be known that we are not alone, and that you have not abandoned us.

Thank you

