

Members of the Montgomery County Council,

My name is Laura Fisher. My fiancé and I grew up in Montgomery County, graduating from MCPS schools, and now we are both high school teachers in MCPS. Throughout the challenges of the past year, we have been grateful for Montgomery County's leadership in trying to keep us, our families, our students, and all residents safe. We are happy to be back in school buildings, and to start to return to "normal."

We were planning our wedding for June of 2020, but when the pandemic started, we quickly decided to postpone for a year. Now that our new date is approaching, we ask you to vote to allow event venues to open at 50% capacity, with safety measures such as distancing and masks in place. It is difficult for us to understand how it is deemed acceptable for a restaurant to operate at 50% capacity, but not to hold a wedding reception (with pods of family members) under the same restrictions. We certainly do not dismiss the threat of new COVID variants. However, we, and most of our family members, are fully vaccinated. With our wedding date set, we can ask our guests to isolate and be tested before and after the event. All this is to say we are confident that we can hold our event without contributing to the spread of the disease. It is troubling that we are permitted to supervise large groups (well above 25) of maskless teenagers during lunch, but we cannot gather with 50 vaccinated family members.

As I'm sure you understand, the cost of planning our wedding has been significant. If we cannot have our event on June 26, we stand to lose a good amount of money that is non-refundable. The businesses we are working with have struggled so much financially, so they cannot afford to be flexible with us, unfortunately. Please vote to allow venues to open at 50% capacity by May 1.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Laura Fisher