

Montgomery County Council

sitting as the Montgomery County Board of Public Health
Hearing on the Sixth Amended Board of Health Regulation
to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the County

May 18, 2021

Testimony of Aaron Droller
Silver Spring, Maryland

Good morning Council President Hucker and members of the Montgomery County Council. My name is Aaron Droller. I am a resident of Silver Spring, Maryland, and the father of two children ages five and seven. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the Board of Health's Sixth Amended Board of Health Regulation to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the County.

I testify today to implore this Council and the Montgomery County government to lift all outdoor mask mandates for children in summer camps. Children have made enormous sacrifices this year in Montgomery County, having been made to endure closed public schools and social isolation far longer than most students across the country. Young children deserve to have a joyful summer for all they have sacrificed this year. It would be an act of cruelty to require young children to wear masks for hours at a time in the hot and humid Maryland summer with limited cooling opportunities. I challenge every member of this Council and the Montgomery County Executive to wear a mask outside in 95 degree weather for seven hours, and then see if you still believe this is an appropriate policy for young children.

Forcing children to wear masks at summer camp cannot be justified on public health grounds. After a year of this pandemic, we have voluminous data that makes it clear that children simply do not get sick from the coronavirus beyond occasional mild symptoms, except in very rare and unusual circumstances.¹ This pandemic is coming to an end, as most clearly demonstrated by the recent CDC guidance declaring that all vaccinated persons need not social distance or wear masks under almost all circumstances. Montgomery County presently has

¹ Susceptibility to SARS-CoV-2 Infection Among Children and Adolescents Compared With Adults: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis, JAMA Pediatrics, 2021 Feb 1;175(2):143-156. American Academic of Pediatrics Children and COVID-19 State Level Report, available at <https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/children-and-covid-19-state-level-data-report/>. See also <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/covid19/data/case-counts.html#deaths-age> (last visited May 15, 2021).

among the lowest rates of COVID-19 in the country among major metropolitan areas east of the Mississippi River.² As of Saturday, May 15th, our 7-day average of new confirmed case is at the lowest point since March of 2020.³ Our vaccination rate for the entire population is over 51%, and is over 60 percent for the vaccine eligible population.⁴ We have a highly effective vaccine that is free and widely available. All adults and camp counselors who want it will be vaccinated by the summer. All of these factors make it clear that there is simply no sound policy rationale to force children to wear masks at camp, and it is likely more dangerous to pursue a mandatory making policy with potential heat exhaustion and stroke. And of course, removing a mask mandate does not mean children are forbidden from wearing masks. It would just be their option to do so.

The residents of Montgomery County have made enormous sacrifices during this pandemic. We have masked, we have social distanced, we have vaccinated, and we have kept our kids out of school far longer than needed. One of the greatest cruelties of this period has been the imposition of immense burdens on young children that they should not have had to bear. Montgomery County was at the forefront of imposing public health measures at the beginning of this pandemic, but it has lagged far behind moving toward normalcy amidst a brightening public health picture. Do not make the same mistake this summer that has been made in public schools this past year. Remove the outdoor mask mandate for children in summer camps. Give children the joyful summer they serve.

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<https://www.wjla.com/news/local/we-are-not-out-of-the-woods-yet-montgomery-county-health-officer-cautious-on-reopening>.

³ Montgomery County COVID-19 Surveillance Dashboard, available at <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/covid19/data/#dashboard> (last visited May 15, 2021).

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention COVID-19 Data Tracker, available at <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view> (last visited May 15, 2021).

