Position on
Amended Board of Health Regulation to prevent the spread of COVID-19, and indoor mask guidance in Montgomery County, MD

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Position on Amendment

- I agree with the amendment, where rather than immediate reinstatement of masking policy based reaching "Substantial Transmission", the status must be maintained over 7 consecutive days in order for masking requirement to be reinstated.

- It appears that the county masking policy is based on this one criteria of Substantial Transmission definition or this one criteria has the most weight for decision making. And this is incorrect.

- The council should clearly define all criteria and data points used for triggering the mask mandate, including the weight of each data point. Other critical criteria not considered should be added.
  - The MC website cites multiple Primary and Secondary indicators, however it appears that the "Substantial Transmission" criteria is solely used for triggering the mask mandates and this is incorrect. So how are these other criteria used and factored in for masking policy?
  - The county masking policy should be based on all critical and relevant data points seen together as a whole and not individually.

The data on the following slides are from the Montgomery County Covid-19 Information Portal

Concern on Criteria for Masking policy

- Giving more weight to the current transmission rate definition of Substantial which is out of date given the current status of vaccinations, advanced therapeutics and mortality rates is incorrect.
- Since most of the population is vaccinated and the vaccines are highly effective in preventing mortality and severe Covid, the <u>vast majority of the transmissions only result in minor or asymptomatic Covid.</u>
  - Yes there are cases of severe Covid/death in vaccinated, but by all accounts that appears to be a very low percentage and more likely in the elderly and at risk groups.
  - The at risk groups can continue practicing social distancing / masking as needed – OPTIONAL.
  - Recommend for the county to provide OPTIONAL guidelines for the at risk population.
- Transmission and positivity rate should only be of high concern if the vaccination rates were low which would have resulted in more death and hospitalizations.

Indicators for for Masking policy

- Critical and relevant indicators that should be included as part of the analysis to determine mask mandates are:
  - Mortality Rate
    - Mortality in past 7 days has been less than 10 as per CDC data and CDC graphs show overall decline in mortality.
  - Hospitalization due to Covid is only 5.5%
  - Vaccination / immunity numbers should be considered.
    - Current vaccination rate is 91.3% of eligible population.
  - Transmission rating -
    - Current "Substantial Transmission" rate is defined as when have more than 50 confirmed Covid Case out of 100,000 residents, that's 0.05% of the population – currently 51.2
      - This definition of Substantial should be amended since infection no longer equals high mortality.
    - Positivity Rate which is currently 1.5% defined as low.
    - How can we have "Substantial Transmission" and yet "Low Positivity Rate? They seem to contradict each other.
- Given the above data as a whole and looking at Positivity Rate, there is no reason for mandatory masking given the fact that as a society we do have to live with some level of risk with regards to illnesses and death as we had before Covid.
  - There are and have been many viruses that are deadly, and we lived normally without mandates.
  - The current status of Covid: high vaccinations, low mortality, low hospitalization rates, and advanced therapeutics do no warrant extra measures and mandates.
  - IT IS UNDER CONTROL.

Issues with an Ill Defined Masking Policy

- Amplification of Transmission rate only contributes to the perception that the vaccines are ineffective.

- With 91.3% vaccination rate, enforcing mask mandates only builds the case that vaccines are ineffective and there is no end in sight.

- A no End in Sight perception only exasperates overall mental health issues and resulting drug dependencies among the residents.

- Many residents also now seem to have a perception that no COVID illness or death is acceptable and should be avoided at all COST.
  - This is a very dangerous outcome and is resulting in hypersensitivity, unjustified fear in the vaccinated (data points on effectiveness of vaccines and mortality/severe Covid do not justify panic), rage against anyone citing data and having opposing views.
  - NO Death/illness at ALL COSTS is a not a healthy outlook and certainly not one that should be reinforced.

- With overall good numbers, from mortality rates to hospitalizations, a masking policy based on an ill defined transmission rate will not be an acceptable metric for residents who feel trapped in a never ending nightmare.

- In addition to psychological issues, mask mandates at gyms are resulting in lower participation in exercise and thus a more unhealthy population.
  - Gym memberships have declined due to reinstatement of mask policy.

- Instead the County government should try harder to educate the residents on the positive outcome that has been achieved and set healthy, logical and sensible expectations.

Backup Data

Montgomery County Indicators
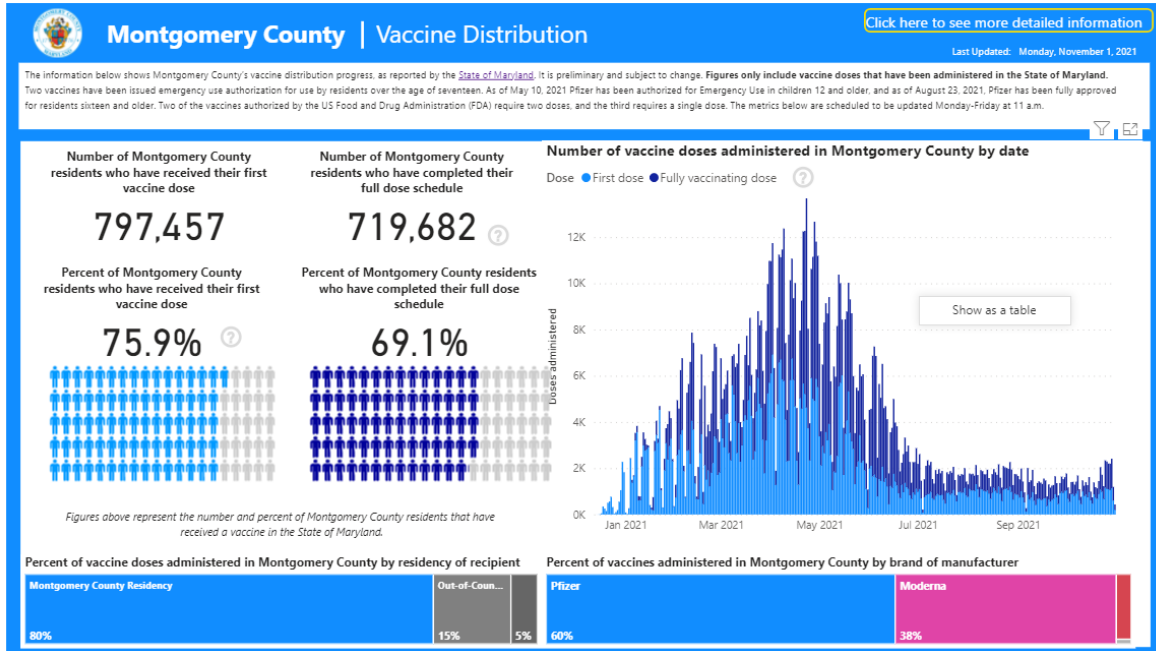
Montgomery County Data Covid Data

From MC website

Why the vaccination percentage does not match the CDC data?

7-day Metrics	7-day Percent Change	
Community Transmission		Substantial
Everyone in **Montgomery County, Maryland** should wear a mask in public, indoor settings. Mask requirements might vary from place to place. Make sure you follow local laws, rules, regulations or guidance. How is community transmission calculated?		November 1, 2021
Cases		544
Case Rate per 100k		51.78
% Positivity		1.94%
Deaths		<10
% of population ≥ 12 years of age fully vaccinated		91.3%
New Hospital Admissions		24

From CDC website

Death Rate – low below 10 past 7 days – CDC data

Cases & Deaths in Montgomery County, Maryland

Data through Sun Oct 31 2021

Total Cases (last 7 days)	544
Case Rate (last 7 days)	51.78
% Change (last 7 days)	8.58

Total Deaths (last 7 days)	<10
Death Rate (last 7 days)	suppressed
% Change (last 7 days)	12.5

7 Day Moving Averages
Tue, Jan 21st 2020 - Sun, Oct 31st 2021
Use slider to update time series chart