

Dear Montgomery County Councilmembers,

I write you once again as a concerned Bethesda resident, and scientific professional in the biotech industry with expertise in Infectious Disease (Ph.D. Microbiology and Immunology, University of Maryland, Baltimore, 2015) to oppose the latest vaccine passport proposal meant to curb the spread of SARS-CoV-2.

While this proposal is well intentioned, it's becoming very clear that the biological properties of this virus (a mucosal virus that does not typically have viremia as part of its pathogenesis) mean that these vaccines do not and will not prevent infection or transmission, as the CDC has [stated](#) (1). This undercuts the basic argument for vaccine passports, as any business full of only vaccinated people could easily have substantial virus transmission. There are many real world examples of events involving significant spread from vaccinated individuals from [before](#) and [during](#) the Omicron wave, and [increasing data](#) that suggests vaccinated individuals have high epidemiological relevance (2-5).

While it is true that vaccinated individuals are less likely to be infected, according to data from some [local jurisdictions](#) (6) and [CDC data](#) from before the Omicron wave (7), this reduction does not establish that vaccine passports significantly alter the course of infection in a population. With the rise of Omicron, vaccine effectiveness against infection is [plummeting](#), and even with the protection of three doses of mRNA vaccine infection is a near certainty as number of exposures increase (8).

To my knowledge, there are no clear and compelling data that vaccine passports significantly alter the infection rate in any population, especially one as highly vaccinated as Montgomery County. Even a 100% vaccinated jurisdiction like Gibraltar was not spared from a large wave of Omicron cases (9). It is similarly groundless to believe that this vaccine passport policy will convince the last holdouts in the county to get vaccinated, since at this point any adult not yet vaccinated has made the conscious choice to

remain unvaccinated, and it is unlikely any such policy will sway them with Virginia right across the river providing an easy escape.

In the absence of any evidence that a vaccine passport will be effective by any measure, it is completely inappropriate to enact such a disruptive, discriminatory, divisive, counterproductive, and illogical policy in this county. Your constituents are very tired of evidence-free, COVID theatre politics, and such policies will only serve to damage the credibility of public health guidance down the road.

Please vote against this proposal.

Regards,
Sergio A. Mojica, Ph.D.

References

- 1.) <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/effectiveness/why-measure-effectiveness/breakthrough-cases.html>
- 2.) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8485578/>
- 3.) <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/dec/12/how-omicron-appears-to-be-infecting-britain-despite-the-vaccine>
- 4.) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8604656/>
- 5.) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8481107/>
- 6.) <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/covid19/Documents/DataReports/Breakthrough-Report-01-13-2022.pdf>
- 7.) <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7034e5.htm>
- 8.) <https://vinayprasadmmdmph.substack.com/p/vaccine-effectiveness-goes-down-the>
- 9.) <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/gibraltar/>