

Dear Council Members:

I am writing to express my opinion on the proposed vaccine passport mandate. I appreciate the difficult task of attempting to protect the public health during the pandemic while operating under ever changing facts and circumstances and that everyone involved is doing their best to reach the correct conclusions.

The proposed passport system if adopted will be government enforced segregation and take away basic privileges from a class of citizens that would have been unimaginable prior to the pandemic. Although the proposal is for the beneficial reason to promote public health, the potentially positive effects on public health need to be evaluated against the harms of government mandated segregation and the stripping of a certain class of citizens' basic privileges. Moreover, considering the almost universal vaccination rate of the county's adults, almost the entire burden of the mandate will fall upon the county's children.

We should all believe that segregation and the removal of a certain class of citizens' basic privileges, especially ones that will have overwhelming effect on our county's children, should only be adopted if there is absolute certainty it will greatly and unequivocally enhance public health. This is a burden that I do not believe science and current real-world observations can meet, particularly with respect to children.

The public health benefits of vaccination and by extension of the proposal can be twofold, the stopping of transmission and reduction of severe outcomes and burdens on the healthcare system.

Omicron currently is causing 95% of the infections countrywide which has caused major "breakthrough" infections across our highly vaccinated county. The science is clear that a two-dose vaccine regimen does not stop transmission and there is strong scientific evidence that boosters quickly lose their effectiveness in stopping transmission. Pfizer's own CEO acknowledges these facts. Stopping transmission therefore can't justify the segregation of the passport proposal and the harm it will cause our children.

Second, vaccines can reduce serious outcomes and stresses on the healthcare system, which appears to remain true. However, today's Montgomery County Covid dashboard shows that hospitalization bed utilization is "low" and ICU utilization is "moderate." All data on the dashboard, including those signifying "high" utilization or transmission have begun to abruptly and positively trend down. Moreover, from the onset of the pandemic, science has shown that children have never been at risk for severe outcomes from Covid that are greater than everyday risks associated with the flu or other ordinary activities (the dashboard shows that there has never been a Covid death in the county for anyone aged 19 or under).

We all know that our children have been greatly affected by the pandemic through the closing of schools and loss of activities and social and mental development. President Biden, the CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics have all stated that schools should remain open and the harm of closing outweighs the risks of Covid in children. While the passport proposal does not apply to schools, it would prohibit unvaccinated children from attending almost all social, developmental, educational and athletic activities outside of schools. Learning and social development does not stop at the end of the school day and the council should not adopt any policy to further harm our children's development and physical and mental health.

While I do not support the proposal generally, if the council chooses to move forward with adopting the proposal I strongly urge it to modify the proposal to exclude children under 18 (or at a minimum with respect to social, developmental, educational and athletic activities).

I thank you for your consideration of my views.