

Jan. 17, 2022

Councilmembers,

Two of the County Executive's top priorities are thriving youth and families and a growing economy. The vaccine passport being proposed hinders achieving those goals. Please vote against a vaccine passport.

The vaccine passport will negatively impact children who have suffered the most by preventing them from being able to visit educational facilities and from interacting with their peers, e.g., go to museums, the zoo, the aquarium, indoor play areas, take swim lessons, attend soccer practice, dance classes, Grown up and me classes, as many parents are reluctant to vaccinate their low-risk 5+ year olds. Children of parents who have chosen to not get vaccinated for their own personal reasons will also be negatively affected. We are seeing an increase in developmental delays and mental health issues — the vaccine passport will only exacerbate these issues by stopping all opportunities for unvaccinated children to be part of society. What WILL they be able to do — it's freezing outside and not all children attend day care or are in school? Is more isolation really the answer?

With already high vaccination rates, the virus is still spreading. The arrival of Omicron proved that the vaccine doesn't stop the spread of the virus. Therefore, vaccine passports won't stop the spread but will hinder businesses as it will require more work (staff) for them to manage enforcement and people already see that the vaccines don't stop the spread so those who are worried, will still not go out and those that aren't vaccinated and not afraid, will not be able to go out. It will drive business away from Montgomery County to surrounding areas and divide the people between those that can and those that cannot.

This proposal isn't about encouraging more people to get the vaccine (since this county has one of the highest vaccination rates in the country) but is about punishing those that choose not to get it. It will push the unvaccinated out of society, including children, or at least push them to Virginia or the next county. When does the requirement end? When will it be safe for the unvaccinated and vaccinated to interact again? Where does this type of overreach end? The flu kills more children each year than COVID - will you require confirmation of the flu vaccine in future years to visit a museum, take swim lessons, play with friends at an indoor play space- all in the name of public safety? Please vote no on this proposal.

Here's a recent example that can act as an analogy to what the proposal is trying to do but highlights its ineffectiveness in reality: A relative of mine recently went on a cruise. My relative was fully vaccinated (as required to take the cruise) as were all the staff and performers on the ship — no exceptions. Additionally, all passengers and staff were tested minutes before boarding the ship. They stopped at as few ports and upon returning to the US, there were hundreds of positive cases of COVID. While the cruise line's plans in theory sounded like a responsible and safe one — it didn't work in reality.

Even with the best of intentions and all the safeguards put in place, the virus still spread. Have faith that the residents of Montgomery County can make vaccination decisions for themselves, their family and their community — knowing no one wants to get sick, no one wants to spread the virus and no one wants children to suffer emotionally, physically or developmentally. The mandates in the vaccine passport will not stop the spread of the virus but WILL cause youth and families and the economy to suffer.

Finally, just last week, The New York Times reported that daily case reports have been falling rapidly in Cleveland, Newark and Washington D.C., which is a good sign. D.C.'s vaccine passport just started on Jan. 15 so the decline can't be attributed to their vaccine passport. The article states that Omicron may be starting to level-off or decline, making this proposal even more unnecessary.

Thank you for your attention,  
Lisa Reid Connoles  
Resident of District 3

January 24, 2022

Councilmembers,

I watched the City Council's meeting on Tuesday (Jan. 18) and was pleased to see ALL of the testimony from residents was against the proposal with many great points of how it will negatively impact businesses and families. The business groups that were invited to appear also ALL shared their concerns with the proposal. Clearly, this proposal will negatively affect families - children- and businesses. Data shows that both the vaccinated and the unvaccinated are getting Omicron. This proposal will not stop the spread of the virus.

Councilmember Jawando's showed his real motivation for this proposal by gleefully quoting French President Macron, that the vaccine passport is "to piss off the unvaccinated". He didn't say that it would stop the spread, or how it would help his constituents and make Montgomery County better. I found this reference despicable and proves that this measure is purely punitive.

I also wanted to address Councilmember Rice's closing statements when he called out that requiring a vaccine to attend school is different from requiring one for a young person to go to the movies or to get fast food. What I think he is missing is that the proposal includes restrictions on many educational opportunities - museums, zoos, aquariums, indoor play spaces. This means no swim lessons, no soccer practice, no Grown up and me classes - nowhere for children to go in the freezing cold temperatures. Children are experiencing developmental delays and mental health issues that require our attention. Don't prevent them from learning through play, learning through experiences and being part of society because their parents aren't vaccinated or their parents choose not to get their child vaccinated.

With one of the highest vaccination rates in the country, why add the additional burden to businesses and families unless it is to punish those that don't comply?

Vote no on vaccine passports.

Also, I submitted testimony for the Jan. 18 meeting and I don't see it on the website.

Sincerely,  
Lisa Reid Connole