

Dear Montgomery County Council Members,

My name is Dr. Mumta Purohit. I have lived in Montgomery County for 36 years and currently live in Silver Spring. This is my written testimony AGAINST the proposed vaccine requirement to enter bars, restaurants, recreation centers, and other covered establishments.

It is my belief that this proposed mandate is traumatizing, racist, and lacks statistically significant data to support it.

While I acknowledge the difficulty in your job, I would like for you to note the difficulty in my job as a mental health provider. I am seeing firsthand the immense negative impacts on mental well-being from your draconian mandates.

At the start of this pandemic, I agreed with your mandates. It made sense. We did not know enough about the virus and how it could impact the health of people of all ages. However, by May 2020, it became abundantly clear that this virus is hardest on our elderly citizens, and those with multiple underlying health conditions (obesity, heart disease, and diabetes). All efforts should have been made to protect these individuals. Unfortunately, that's not what was done. Instead, a one size fits all approach was used, treating the young and healthy the same as the elderly and ill. Never in history have healthy people been required to quarantine, to socially distance, and wear performative face coverings that by Dr. Fauci's own admission, do little to nothing to protect from the virus.

During my 15-year career in mental health I knew of abusers in the forms of caregivers, friends, strangers and others. Today the abuser taking the biggest toll on our mental health is our County Council. People are scared to think for themselves and are looking for guidance from their elected officials. Critical thinking is a skill and ability we are taught from a young age and is a staple of democracy as a whole. To have the autonomy to weigh our options and make decisions based on our own personal beliefs is a staple of our democracy. Yet the public is being told they ought to remain compliant and "wear the damn mask" or "get the vaccine." We're being told not to even think about it, not to worry about doing our own research, not to even seek guidance from our doctors. It is as if those on the council have already made the decision for you. This not only takes away body autonomy, but also mental autonomy. A blind eye seems to have been turned to any data suggesting that this vaccine is not necessary for all individuals and has its own set of potential complications for some. The data is now abundantly clear that the vaccine does not stop transmission and only helps to mitigate symptoms in the vaccinated individual. The argument that this is a pandemic of the unvaccinated has been laid to rest.

When given the opportunity, people are smart and capable of making their own decisions about their health. Some have already had covid and it is now established by the CDC that natural immunity exists. Furthermore, it has been established that side effects from the vaccines are more likely following natural infection.

Making a medical decision with regards to any substance which may have side effects, no matter how mild or severe, is one that a person should make with the guidance of their own medical provider after obtaining informed consent.

By proposing this vaccine passport mandate, County Executive Elrich is acting as a Medical provider even though he has no training in this field.

Ripping away bodily autonomy without sufficient data to support this mandate will only lead to trauma.

A stark difference lies between CONSENT and COERSION. Enforcing this mandate would be coercion. Coercion is a form of abuse. There is unlimited access to information on the internet. You cannot expect people to not do their own research. This is especially the case with parents who may want to take some time to see longitudinal data before deciding to vaccinate. Decisions made through FORCE and COERCION can lead to TRAUMA.

This mandate is also RACIST. Many of those unvaccinated are BIPOC. If you haven't already, please research the ways in which our government has experimented on the BIPOC community. Just to name a few: Tuskegee Syphilis Study, Henrietta Lacks, and Puerto Rican women used as guinea pigs (without consent) for what makes today's Birth Control pills. The examples I have listed don't even begin to put a dent in the barbaric history of medical trauma our BIPOC community has faced. They continue to deal with inequitable treatment from our medical community. For example, even today, African American women are disproportionately more likely to die giving birth in American hospitals. The BIPOC community has a right to be distrustful of our medical community, and medical coercion is not the way to regain this trust.

It is abhorrent that Marc Elrich, the epitome of white male privilege believes he has the right to tell people of color that they must take a vaccine to participate in society. Growing up in Montgomery County, I have only known diversity. I have always felt proud of being raised in this county and even prouder that I am now able to raise my two sons here. However, if this mandate passes, I will be forced to relocate my family. It is not because I am against the vaccine. Rather, I do not want my children exposed to the racism and segregation that this mandate will create.

Places like New York, Israel, and Chicago are proof that Vaccine passports do absolutely nothing to minimize spread and only hurt the community, businesses, economy, and most importantly the psyche. No to the vaccine passports.

Thank you,

Dr. Mumta Purohit , PsyD