

On January 18, the Council is scheduled to vote on a Vaccine Passport mandate that will not only damage local businesses but also create second class citizens in our county.

The vaccine mandate, as proposed by the Executive, is a naked power grab by the county, with the aim of further solidifying its control over the lives of its citizens. As I'm sure we are all aware, the dominant strain of COVID-19 presently is the Omicron variant; this variant has been shown to be about as deadly as the seasonal flu.

As such, the threat it poses is hardly material enough to warrant true, emergency measures, such as this "Passport" proposal.

If we were to accept these types of emergency measures for such endemic problems such the Omicron variant, what would be next? Enforcement would have to be funded somehow – can we come to expect a monthly tax to support the county's efforts in this regard, for maintaining the vaccine passport and masking requirements? And if so, for how long? When can we expect the emergency to end, if we cannot expect it to be over with the emergence of a dominant strain with such a low death rate as that of Omicron? How long will the people and businesses of our great county expect to suffer the whims of the Executive and this Council, with each season bringing more misery from on high?

Further, in terms of efficacy, over 80% of the county's populace is vaccinated presently. However, as we have seen, and has been confirmed by the powers that be, the spread of Omicron is hardly dented by vaccination status or the use of cloth masks. So, what purposes then does a vaccine passport regime serve, if such vaccine has practically no effect on the spread of the virus, especially amongst such a heavily vaccinated populace? On its face, given this, it seems an unreasonable and unnecessary burden, one that will hurt businesses most of all – something that should not be taken lightly given our status in the state and our seeming, losing economic battle with the Northern Virginia counties. We should be encouraging our own economic activity, rather than encouraging businesses and consumers to hop across county lines.

As to creating second class citizens, by what right do any of us have to split off a segment of our society and ostracize them from public life (which does include economic activity)? The story of our nation and the history of my own people, as an Israeli-American, are riddled with examples of why such actions ought to be frowned upon. Shall we come to expect the unvaccinated people to wear distinguishing clothing? Shall we come to expect the unvaccinated to have to pay a monthly fee so as for us to tolerate their existence? Shall we come to expect them to have to live in their own defined sectors of our county? Where does this end?

I urge the Council to reject this "Vaccine Passport" scheme that will cause more businesses to close, result in lost revenue to the County, and create further inequity in our society.

Thank you.

Alon Porat  
N. Bethesda, MD 20852

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