



January 10, 2022

Councilman Friedson, I understand a Vaccine mandate is being discussed, and might even be voted on soon for Montgomery County. I have experience with Vaccine mandates through our operations in Canada and wanted to relay that experience to you and the other Councilmembers.

While I detail the information in this document, I'll summarize the points just below.

1. You'll find that a Vaccine mandate executed on a limited scale, will have little to no effect with respect to halting new Covid 19 cases.
2. Montgomery County lacks sufficient "scale" that might otherwise position a Vaccine mandate to yield noticeable or effective results with regard to stopping the spread of Covid. In short, Montgomery County is geographically too small, and the work-arounds to avoid the mandate too easy, for the order itself to be measurably effective.
3. Our experience in Canada, in which ALL (not just some) interior spaces were ordered to provide proof of vaccination, has not slowed down their new Covid case count, this despite a very high vaccination rate amongst the Canadian population.
4. And Finally, the USA is now dealing with Covid 13.0 (aka "Omicron"), a milder variant to the March 2020 version (Alpha). Yet – the County still tracks, pursues & reacts to Covid in 2022 as if It's still March 2020.

Sometimes the best action is to take no action at all.

Our opinion is that a limited vaccine mandate imposed on some businesses in Montgomery County will yield no material benefit with respect to generating additional citizen vaccinations, nor a reduction in the "case count." We are, therefore, recommending against a vaccine mandate being imposed on recreational facilities.

Who is Hockey North America (HNA)

Hockey North America is a business that has been operating in Montgomery County since 1980. HNA promotes and operates adult ice hockey leagues, learn-to-play schools, and tournaments and is a significant user of the Cabin John, Wheaton and Rockville ice arenas.

Now in our 42nd season, HNA maintains significant operations in both the USA & Canada and is the single largest provider of adult recreational ice hockey programs in Montgomery County.

In Consideration of a Vaccine Mandate

HNA's experience during the past year is that a vaccine requirement to enter an establishment is largely an inconsequential act with respect to pushing additional people to "get the shot." A mandate is something that sounds impressive and very "action oriented" on paper, but as we'll see, in practice the results are that a mandate is not an effective strategy for increasing vaccination rates nor for reducing "case counts."

Vaccination Rates in Montgomery County are already very high

For months the County has been touting its exceptional Vax penetration amongst the population and it is indeed impressive. So the first question thusly is what is the objective of a mandate? If it's to encourage more people to get the shot, the County has already done that. What we've recently seen in the County is that the numbers are going up. What we will also see is that in areas that already have a vaccine mandate and high vaccination rates – the case numbers are likewise going up.

But yet..... "cases" are on the rise

Despite a high county vaccination rate and an imposed indoor mask mandate, the "case count" is rising at a fast rate in Montgomery County, right along with the rest of the Country.

One aspect of tracking the impact of Covid that may need to be revised is looking exclusively at the "case count" as a catalyst for action. The concept of "Case count" harkens back to Covid March 2020 (aka Covid version 1.0) when case numbers were a fairly direct predictor of both hospitalization & fatalities. As we are now on "Omicron," Covid is now version 13.0 – and very clearly not as serious as Covid 1.0.

The idea that the Omicron mutation is milder is "science" and now widely accepted today with respect to Covid's evolving virility. And yet the Country still treats & tracks Covid as if it were still March 2020. The virus has mutated. Its pursuit by many governmental entities, however, has not – which means...

... the key to dealing with Covid is and always has been by "following the science," As has already been reported by ([Former FDA Chief Dr Scott Gottlieb](#)), a CNBC regular contributor, (as well as other networks), Omicron, a fast moving variant, has peaked in the states of New York, New Jersey and Maryland. Omicron moves quickly - and is expected to burn out just as quickly. As such, a Vaccine mandate at this point should be regarded as a token gesture with no meaningful impact with respect to Omicron expected.

The Virus is already telling us that an indoor mandate won't offer any meaningful result

Case increases. Omicron spreading via those already vaccinated, both in Montgomery County and around the Country. The virus is specifically telling us that putting up a barrier such as a vaccine mandate/passport in the midst of an already high penetration of shots amongst the County population, is overkill and won't work.

In short - stopping someone at the door of an ice rink isn't going to stop or slow down the case count.

Real World Experience is Available just by Looking to Canada

Now on to a practical example.

There are Vaccine mandates in place in Canada, so let's use Canada as a real example where Hockey North America (HNA) operates.

Similar to the County residents, Canada has a high level of penetration with respect to overall vaccines administered. When the vaccine mandate was passed in British Columbia and Alberta, we all dutifully collected the proof-of-vax information from the players which, to no one's surprise, was nearly 100% (very high, just like the Montgomery County vaccine rate).

Despite the mandate in place for months now, the Canadian case count is likewise rising, just like in Montgomery County. **Keep in mind that Canada has some built in advantages that Montgomery County does not have.**

The Canadian vaccine mandates were imposed on a province-wide scale at the start of the hockey season (September). That meant everyone in the province had to comply. The sheer geographic size of a province gave the mandate the necessary scale to stand a chance at being successful. **Montgomery County DOES NOT have this advantage.** To give a similar example, The entire state of Maryland would have to pass a vaccine mandate.

Geographic scale helps accomplish what a vaccine mandate intends, which is to encourage compliance. Montgomery County will have no such advantage with an imposed vaccine mandate. **And yet Canada, even with the critical advantage of massive scale – is still experiencing a rapid increase in cases.**

This directly implies that a smaller scale mandate such as that of the County, will not accomplish any meaningful objective that the natural course of the virus won't accomplish on its own. This is all easily verified information. I encourage the Council to review how things have gone in places that already have a vaccine mandate.

From the observation & experience of areas with a mandate already in place, the logical conclusion is that the mandate played no role whatsoever in lowering, or preventing, cases in Canada and that one should therefore not expect any meaningful result for Montgomery County.

The Ways to Avoid a Mandate are Easy – but Costly to Montgomery County Business.

Finally, from a practical point of view and because of the aforementioned lack of scale, avoiding a Montgomery County vaccine mandate would be too easy and without consequence from neighboring jurisdictions. County residents can drive 20 minutes into Virginia and not even have to wear a mask, much less show proof of vaccination. The only entities bearing the brunt of the mandate will be the County based businesses.

As an owner / operator of a Montgomery County based business for more than 40 years, I highly recommend that the vaccine mandate not be implemented. The order will not do anything other than cause economic harm and will, in no way, impede the natural progress of Covid, which scientists have already stated, will begin to subside in a matter of weeks on its own.

Thank you for your time & consideration.

Elliott Root
President
Adult Ice Hockey Federation, Ltd.

1/17/22 Update: Just to reiterate the idea that a selective indoor mandate won't work, since originally writing this the [US CDC & Dept of State has now added Canada to the "do not travel" list](#) due to Covid cases rising. As Canada's effort was far more comprehensive than what the Council is suggesting, there's no reason to believe Montgomery County will experience any level of success with the current indoor vaccine mandate plan as presented.