



Committee: Directly to Council
Committee Review: N/A
Staff: Linda McMillan, Senior Legislative Analyst
Purpose: Final action – vote expected
Keywords: Public Health

AGENDA ITEM #6(N)
March 22, 2022
Action

SUBJECT

Resolution to affirm Montgomery County's support of public health officials; Lead Sponsor: Council Vice President Glass; Cosponsors: Council President Albornoz, Councilmember Jawando, Councilmember Hucker, Councilmember Katz, Councilmember Navarro, Councilmember Friedson, Councilmember Riemer and Councilmember Rice

EXPECTED ATTENDEES

None

COUNCIL DECISION POINTS & COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

- Action. Resolution was introduced on March 15, 2022.

DESCRIPTION/ISSUE

State and local Public Health Officers and other public health officials have endured harassment, insults and threats during the COVID-19 pandemic which has led to record numbers of public health officials, resigning, retiring, or being fired. It is also resulting in people being hesitant to serve. Montgomery County voices its support for public health officials and health decisions based on science and data.

SUMMARY OF KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- Maryland Matters reported on January 26, 2022, about HB267/SB298 that were introduced to the Maryland General Assembly and would make threats against hospital workers and public health officials punishable by 90 days imprisonment and a \$500 maximum fine. <https://www.marylandmatters.org/2022/01/26/lawmakers-consider-bill-to-ban-threats-against-health-officials-hospital-workers/>
- Maryland Matters reported on March 1, 2022 about the hearing before the Maryland General Assembly's Joint Committee on Fair Practices and State Personnel Oversight: <https://www.marylandmatters.org/2022/03/01/former-county-health-officers-whistleblower-allege-politicization-within-health-department/>

Attached:
Resolution

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Resolution No.: _____
Introduced: _____
Adopted: _____

**COUNTY COUNCIL
FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND**

Lead Sponsor: Council Vice President Glass
Cosponsors: Council President Alborno, Councilmember Jawando, Councilmember Hucker,
Councilmember Katz, Councilmember Navarro, Councilmember Friedson, Councilmember
Riemer and Councilmember Rice

SUBJECT: To affirm Montgomery County's support of public health officials.

Background

1. A new coronavirus disease, named COVID-19, appeared in China in December 2019 and quickly spread around the world. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared the disease a pandemic.
2. Dr. Travis Gayles served as Montgomery County's Public Health Officer and Chief of Public Health Services for four years, during which his sole priority was to protect the public health and safety of Montgomery County residents; a task he led effectively with the use of science, data and a focus on equity.
3. During his pandemic leadership, Dr. Travis Gayles received threats to his safety, in addition to a stream of racist and homophobic messages.
4. On September 12, 2021, Dr. Travis Gayles left his position as Montgomery County's Public Health Officer and Chief of Public Health Services.
5. In September 2021, Montgomery County retained the services of K&A to assist in a nationwide recruitment effort to hire the county's next Public Health Officer.
6. According to County Section 1A-102 and State Section 3-302 of the Health General codes, the process for the appointment of the County Health Officer/Chief of Public Health Services for Montgomery County is a joint appointment, requiring approval from both the County Council and the Secretary of Health.

7. As of March 2022, two candidates for the Public Health Officer position declined offers over concerns for their safety as a result of the public backlash and political divisions over COVID-19 public policy health decisions.
8. On March 1, 2022, Former Harford County Health Officer David Bishai and Former Montgomery County Health Officer Dr. Travis Gayles testified before the Maryland Joint Committee on Fair Practices and State Personnel Oversight and told state lawmakers that “pandemic policy-making in Maryland has become dangerously politicized and that the state Department of Health routinely failed to support health officers who come under attack, even though they are state employees.”

Action

The County Council for Montgomery County, Maryland approves the following resolution:

1. Montgomery County stands in support of public health officials, including the next Public Health Officer and Chief of Public Health Services.
2. Montgomery County calls for unity, civil discourse and a depoliticization of the pandemic.
3. Montgomery County affirms its commitment to making public policy health decisions based on science and data.

This is a correct copy of Council action.

Selena Mendy Singleton, Esq.
Clerk of the Council