

I'd like to start my written statement on the proposed increase of the Montgomery County Real Estate Taxes for 2021 by thanking the members of the County Council who are speaking out against this action.

To Mr. Erlich, I ask why now, and what is this for? I would like you to consider the following since you do not appear to have done so yet.

The world, our nation, state, and county are in the grip of a pandemic. **NPR reports on April 6th** that, "More Than 10,000 People Have Now Died From COVID-19 In the United States. The U.S. is reporting more COVID-19 cases than any other country in the world, with nearly 350,000 people testing positive for the coronavirus, according to a [COVID-19 dashboard](#) created by Johns Hopkins University's Whiting School of Engineering, which reports coronavirus numbers in near real time."

Our unemployment levels, "... Over the past two weeks [have ballooned to 3.3 million and 6.6 million](#), respectively. According to Forbes April 8, 2020.

USA Today on April 6th reported that our, "Governors Are Pleading for Food Stamp Flexibility Amid This Pandemic." And that, "There are only a handful of states in the country where food aid recipients can buy groceries online. In Maryland, only ShopRite and Amazon will deliver to Food Stamp recipients.

All of this as Bethesda Magazine reports that for Covid 19, "The "unofficial projection" that still needs to be refined **shows the peak at approximately April 29, Montgomery County Deputy Health Officer Dr. James Bridgers said** during a virtual town hall meeting. The peak in cases is significant because it signals the rate of infection has climaxed and could begin to slow."

The last real estate tax increase, also taking place on your watch, as reported by Bethesda Magazine in January of this year, was described as follows, "**The average increase for commercial properties in the same parts of the county was 16.5%, one of the largest gains of any jurisdiction in Maryland. The combined average for residential and commercial properties was an increase of 7.6%.**"

So, Mr. Erlich, I must ask again, what will this additional revenue generated by your latest tax increase be used for? And why now? I am left wondering if this is in any way is a reaction to the defeat of the Kirwan Plan.

While the State and Federal Government extend the deadline to file and pay state and local taxes to July 15th, you opt to propose a tax increase on April 21st as part of your Budget Proposal for 2021.

I can only hope that those on the County Council, and citizens of Montgomery County, speak in a voice loud enough, and language plain enough, to be heard, even by you. I remain hopeful you will change your mind.