

Emmanuel Teitelbaum
Rockville, MD

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Montgomery County Council
Stella Werner Council Office Building
100 Maryland Ave
Rockville, MD 20850

To the Members of the County Council:

I am writing to express my concern regarding the recent executive order (122-20) that would reduce capacity for gyms and restaurants to 25% in response to rising Covid-19 case numbers. Based on the conversations I have had with small business owners in the area, this order would effectively serve as a second shutdown notice that they would not have the capacity to withstand. In many ways, these small businesses are the heart and soul of our community and, while I understand the need to keep people safe during the pandemic, their survival should be prioritized by the Council much more than it is right now.

Take for example the gym I go to--[CrossFit Rockville](#). The owner, Young Woo, started this business in 2017 after saving up for many years. It is an extremely well-run establishment that provides excellent training and a supportive community to its members. There is a long waitlist to get into the gym, yet Woo is struggling to stay open because with the current 50% restriction he can only hold classes with six members at a time. Or, take another favorite establishment or mine, [Villa Maya](#), which became our most popular neighborhood restaurant following a string of failed dive bars in the same location. The owner (Carmelo) has managed stay afloat by offering outdoor dining and providing service at a handful of tables inside; but soon it will be too cold to eat outside. It would be a real loss to the community if it did not survive the winter due to a more restrictive cap on indoor dining.

If the Council chooses to further reduce capacity for restaurants and gyms, then it should find ways to provide financial support to these businesses so that they can survive the further drop in revenues. Additionally, the council can require that landlords reduce rents by an amount commensurate to the capacity reduction and prevent them from evicting restaurant and gym owners while capacity restrictions are in place.

Absent such support, no new restrictions should be placed on restaurant and gym owners. The long-term effects of shuttered businesses on our communities far outweigh the negligible health benefits of an additional reduction of 25% in dining or gym capacity. Instead, the Council should focus on other reliable methods of containment such as testing and contact tracing. For example, phones are now equipped to detect Covid exposure in Washington, D.C. The same technology should also be available here.

Sincerely,



Emmanuel Teitelbaum