

Since the start of the pandemic, many restaurants and retail establishments have been quick to employ new safety measures, including Plexiglas barriers, enhanced sanitation, signage and social distancing prompts, employee wellness screenings, and masking for employees and customers.

I agree that limiting the number of people in restaurants and retail establishments is key to keeping these places a safe place to eat or shop.

In reading the proposed County Executive Order, it seems this is a proposed “one-size-fits-all” mandate. Indoor dining would be suspended, and a maximum of 150 people for every retail establishment, regardless of size is proposed.

With the cold winter months upon us, I believe this will force the majority of independently owned restaurants out of business, and if not, it will definitely force them to lay off the majority of their wait staff, who often have to 2 or more wait staff jobs in the county just to make ends meet.

For retail establishments, a 30,000 square foot store would allow the same number of customers as a 124,000 square foot store.

A 150-person limit will force customers to wait in long lines, in winter weather, to shop. This would also cause choose more crowded space in smaller store than they would be in a larger store.

Surrounding counties have been operating at a 50% occupancy limit for retail, and some are now reducing that to 25%. Further restrictions will potentially force Montgomery County residents to travel elsewhere to obtain food and other essential items, which works against all other measures to contain the spread of the Coronavirus.

Imposing the additional restrictions will cause further frustration, anxiety, and create long lines, that can actually increase the chance of spreading of the virus.

I urge you to reconsider imposing these one-size-fits-all requirements restaurants and essential retail stores.

Domenic DeStefano  
Montgomery County resident since 1998