

Councilmembers.

As the parent of four unvaccinated children under 12 years of age I urge that you take stronger measures to protect public health and children generally, by amending the mask mandate to automatically trigger without the Council meeting to approve based on any transmission level above minimal. Extending to seven days unnecessarily risks public health and caves to anti-mask anti-science extremists in the community.

On Friday, October 29, 2021 I was at the Wheaton Ice Arena with my children for skating and hockey lessons and staff and instructors were interacting with unvaccinated children mask less, jeopardizing the gains that we have made under the minimal enforcement efforts the county has undertaken. I say minimal enforcement as both an EPA enforcement attorney and as a part time retail employee on weekends where I have witnessed the impact capacity waivers granted by the County Executive have had on the health of my coworkers and the staffing of our store. We've had two positive cases in the last month and as recently as this past weekend we had double digit callouts. The county enforcement of capacity restrictions and mask requirements has been minimally visible in the community despite repeated requests by myself and other retail coworkers for stronger workplace enforcement measures.

The fact that you are considering further weakening an already flawed regulation is deeply disturbing. First and foremost the mask requirement never should have been repealed despite transmission levels because of the large population of children in our county who are unable to be vaccinated because there isn't a vaccine available to them. The issue is not one of mortality, the issue is one of reducing transmission, unnecessary infections and time needed to care for those unnecessary infections. Further the trigger for mask requirements should be automatic, public health and transmission should not be allowed to spread while we wait for the Council to meet and make a decision. Prevention demands immediate action, not a wait and see approach.

Finally, as a member of the Racial Equity and Social Justice Advisory Committee I will draw your attention to the county COVID dashboard. The RESJAC asked months ago for the county to break out data for COVID impacts on Native American members of our community. Invisibility of the data means we cannot assess impact on equity for minority members of our community. No action has been taken to address this data deficiency, raising questions as to this body's commitment to racial equity and social justice for Native American residents.

I urge that you take a more serious approach to this pandemic as it is far from over. The Delta+ variant has been detected in the region and new variants will continue to evolve and spread. Mask requirements need to be with us for the long term in order to prevent future flareups and reduce the opportunity for further emergence of variants. Caving to anti-science fringe elements who are more concerned about their comfort and convenience sets the precedent for public health behaviors in future outbreaks and pandemics. You are not setting the right example for those emergency responses.

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