

Dear honorable members of the Council,

Thank you for your service. I am writing to vehemently oppose any more mask mandates in Montgomery County. The metric of “cases” to determine whether or not we need a mask mandate is arbitrary and unscientific at this stage of the pandemic. Covid isn’t going away. It’s time to loosen the grip over citizens’ lives. We are adults and can make our own choices about risk. Adults who want to wear masks can wear them. Parents who are overly concerned can continue to mask their children, who are at the least amount of risk by virtue of their age (even unvaccinated). In fact, a NY Times article from last month highlighted the fact that an unvaccinated child is more protected than a 70-year-old vaccinated adult. Article here: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/12/briefing/covid-age-risk-infection-vaccine.html>

Additionally, I am deeply troubled by the vote today to now tie mask mandate removal to the percentage vaccinated in the 5-11 age group. Did you watch the FDA hearing? If not, perhaps you should. Below is the link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=laaLO_xKmmA

The FDA panel voted in favor of the EUA so that those parents with high-risk children or those parents who are overly fearful could have access to it, NOT so that this vaccine would be mandated. ***The panel members explicitly stated that mandates are not appropriate at this time. Tying mask mandates to vaccination rates essentially creates a de facto mandate, and this is not okay.***

Beyond that, I am concerned that as a governing body, you are constantly moving the goalposts. First, we needed a percentage of the population vaccinated (50 or 70%, I believe) before the mask mandate was lifted. Then, you shifted the goalpost to then using the number of “cases” and “level of transmission” as a metric while completely ignoring hospitalization utilization rates AND the fact that a case today is not the same as a 2020 case. This is not scientific.

Lastly, I am most upset about the implications of this for my preschool age child, who I have kept out of preschool since this pandemic started. At first, I did so out of a fear of COVID, but later, as I looked at the data for children, I kept our toddler out because I felt very uncomfortable with a toddler wearing a mask, especially as it became clear that masking toddlers is completely unnecessary and that most young children get through this just fine. It is important that children in the ages of 2-5 see faces to learn non-verbal communication, facial expressions, etc. It’s beyond belief that as a governing body, you continue to literally ignore the fact that many countries in Europe have never masked children under age 12 in schools (and elsewhere) and they have not seen worse outcomes. I think it is more important to allow children to live as normally as possible since long-term disruption of normal childhood milestones DOES have implications for children’s overall well-being, development, and mental health.

I implore you to please make masks optional, and especially for our youngest children, ages 2-5. Thank you.

Kind Regards,

Jenn Ausiello-Rosenthal