

To the honorable members of the Montgomery County Council:

Thank you for your reconsideration of the COVID-19 Board of Health regulation adopted in CR 19-975. The Council's stated goals in requiring that facial coverings be worn indoors above a specific transmission level were "[t]o reduce the threat to human health... and to protect and save lives."

As you are aware, Montgomery County is a national leader in vaccination rates. County residents stepped up to protect ourselves and our neighbors. The vaccines work: even in the face of the Delta variant surge, Montgomery County's COVID-19 hospitalization and death rates stayed relatively low.

Evidence suggests that COVID-19 is well along the path to becoming an endemic disease. Disease severity will be reduced because most of the population will have built resistance with repeated exposure. With our high vaccination rates, Montgomery County is near that future.

To achieve its stated goals more directly, the Council should rewrite the Board of Health regulation to trigger indoor masking based not on COVID-19 transmission rates but on COVID-19 hospitalization rates. Hospitalization rates are a proxy for severe illness ("threat to human health") and are a leading indicator for mortality ("protect and save lives"). Basing the regulation on hospitalization rates would allow Montgomery County to gracefully handle the receding threat of COVID-19 without changing published criteria.

Sincerely,

Simeon Tomaszewski

Resident, Downtown Silver Spring