



January 14, 2022

The Honorable Gabe Albornoz  
Council President  
Montgomery County Council  
100 Maryland Avenue  
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Council President Albornoz:

The Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce (MCCC) is opposed to the implementation of a vaccine passport as proposed in the *Board of Health Regulation to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the County, Vaccination Requirements to Enter Bars, Restaurants, Recreation Centers, and Other Covered Establishments*. While the Chamber is supportive of health measures that minimize the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on residents and businesses, this proposal was made with little outreach to impacted businesses or the business community at large.

MCCC has not opposed health measures, including mask mandates, and has consistently disseminated information to its members regarding vaccines, testing, indoor masking mandates, and safety protocols throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. As an organization, MCCC continues to take health precautions seriously, implementing a vaccine requirement for our employees, moving our events to virtual platforms, offering telework for all employees, and updating our office space to ensure the safety of employees when they return to the office.

Our Chamber has continuously sought and listened to our many healthcare industry members and is appreciative that so many in Montgomery County have chosen to take health precautions seriously, which is most evident by the high vaccination rate. For that reason, the time for a vaccine passport requirement has long passed. A vaccine passport requirement, in our estimation, does not increase safety, nor will it measurably encourage the remaining few who are reluctant to get vaccinated.

Another significant concern is the numerous burdens this requirement will place on businesses in the community. Businesses are already struggling with a tight labor market, so adding another requirement to implement health policies on overburdened employers and employees is concerning. Additionally, creating a vaccine passport requirement, perhaps the only one that will be required in the state, places Montgomery County businesses at a competitive disadvantage with other jurisdictions.

MCCC contends that this regulation would be difficult to implement and contains other challenges that have not been addressed, including:

- There is no sunset or end date in the regulation, nor are there real metrics for how long the proposed passport requirement would remain in place.
- While some businesses are equipped to verify vaccine status before entering the establishment, others are not and may have to hire additional staff in an increasingly tight labor market.

- All businesses are not equipped to communicate vaccine passport requirements, particularly our hospitality industry – including hotels, theaters, and other entertainment venues - which has a significant number of customers who visit from outside of Montgomery County.
- It will be difficult for businesses to verify the authenticity of vaccine cards for children, who may not have any form of identification.
- Montgomery County businesses already have the ability to implement their own health and safety precautions, and many have chosen that path.

For these reasons, MCCC asks the County Council to reject a vaccine passport in Montgomery County. As always, we look forward to continuing to partner on ways to move Montgomery County forward. As you continue your important work, please do not hesitate to reach out if we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,



Georgette "Gigi" Godwin  
President & CEO  
Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce

cc: Members, Montgomery County Council