
OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR

June 24, 2021

The Hon. Justin Ready
The Hon. Susan Krebs
The Hon. April Rose
The Hon. Haven Shoemaker
James Senate Office Bldg.
11 Bladen St., Rm. 414
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Senator Ready, Delegate Krebs, Delegate Rose, and Delegate Shoemaker:

Thank you for sharing your concerns regarding the University System of Maryland's (USM's) COVID-19 vaccination mandate. I do appreciate your efforts to educate your constituents about the widespread availability of COVID vaccines and their effectiveness in both inhibiting transmission of the disease and moderating the severity of symptoms.

As you well know, nearly three-quarters of Maryland adults are now at least partially vaccinated against COVID, and because of that, the state's infection rate, hospitalization rate, and death rate have dropped significantly. As USM chancellor and as a practicing physician, I'm encouraged and deeply gratified by this extraordinary progress.

However, COVID-19 remains a serious public health threat. We're particularly concerned about more infectious and more dangerous COVID variants now circulating among unvaccinated populations. The Delta variant, accounting for 20 percent of all new COVID cases in the U.S., is the most contagious, and far more likely to infect and sicken young adults—the very group of people overrepresented on our USM campuses.

As we return, by and large, to pre-pandemic levels of in-person operations, students will gather in classrooms, labs, and dining halls; live in congregate housing; participate in co-curricular activities; and play intramural and intercollegiate sports. These gatherings, coupled with lower rates of vaccination among traditional-aged students, leave our universities especially vulnerable to infection outbreak in the absence of effective safety protocols.

The USM Board of Regents and, at its discretion, the chancellor, have been given broad authority and responsibility to manage the affairs of the System's constituent institutions. One of these

responsibilities is to implement safety measures on its university campuses, such as enforcement of vaccination requirements, including (but certainly not limited to) COVID vaccination.

As you note, there will undoubtedly be some people on campus who—for religious or medical reasons—will not be vaccinated. These individuals may seek an accommodation using processes already well-established at their universities, and university officials are communicating those processes to students and employees. To manage campus and community risk, COVID testing will be more frequent for those who are unvaccinated and therefore far more susceptible to the disease.

Given the very contagious nature of COVID-19, we're using absolutely every tool we have to provide a safe learning, working, and living environment for our students, faculty, and staff. We're grateful for the evolving therapies, such as those you cite, shown to help alleviate COVID symptoms.

But, of course, we're especially grateful for the vaccines that have proved highly safe and highly effective under rigorous FDA standards and intensive monitoring. It's these vaccines that make possible our return to campus this fall. And our students, in particular, are eager for this long-awaited resumption of in-person instruction and on-campus living.

Again, I thank you for writing, and, of course, I thank you for your service on behalf of Maryland and Marylanders. I'm confident we have better days ahead.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Jay A. Perman". The signature is written in dark ink on a white background.

Jay A. Perman
Chancellor