



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

ANDREW FRIEDSON
COUNCILMEMBER
DISTRICT 1

MEMORANDUM

March 2, 2021

TO: Marc Elrich, County Executive
FROM: Andrew Friedson, Councilmember
SUBJECT: Target Reopening Metrics

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Friedson".

The declining number of new COVID cases, declining rate of positive COVID tests, and increasing number of individuals receiving COVID vaccinations over the past month have been extremely encouraging. We cannot let our collective guard down, even as the combination of stricter public health guidelines and broad community buy-in to adhere to them clearly worked as intended after sharply increasing transmission during and after the holiday season.

Naturally, residents and other county stakeholders are now anxiously awaiting a return to as close to "normal" as is practicable and wondering when they can reasonably expect services and amenities to reopen and modest expansions to capacity restrictions. This is especially true for young people anxiously hoping to return to sports and recreational activities, local business owners desperately trying to keep their lights on, and county workers eagerly awaiting a return to their jobs and livelihoods. While we must continue to do all we can to follow public health guidance to protect the safety of our residents, the County has a public obligation to provide clear, transparent metrics that will be used specifically as the basis for reopening decisions.

We are in this together – as a county government and with our county residents. Better communication with specific reopening metrics will build goodwill and is likely to yield greater compliance with public health measures. When everyone knows and understands the rules and why they are needed, they will be increasingly likely to follow them. What can be perceived as subjective can and should be shown to be objective. This will help to alleviate understandable frustration among many families and businesses and allow them to follow the metrics, appropriately plan and prepare for changes in advance, and encourage others to comply with the public health guidance in order to reach specific levels of lowered transmission.

I ask you and the County's public health team to provide a clear set of specific metrics needed in order to move to the next phase of each restricted activity and business. This can be done without compromising public health and safety to demonstrate that we fully understand the disruption that these drastic public health measures have had on our residents' lives and livelihoods. It is also the best way to counter the potential complacency and non-compliance with Executive Orders we all fear now that the situation appears to be improving. The best way to ensure that residents play by the rules is to ensure that they understand the clear rationale behind them.

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to your response.

CC: Dr. Travis Gayles, County Health Officer
Dr. Earl Stoddard, Director, Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security
Richard Madaleno, Chief Administrative Officer