

Public Hearing Notice: COVID-19 Local Order

The Gaithersburg-Germantown Chamber, the Rockville Chamber, the Greater Bethesda Chamber, and the Greater Silver Spring Chamber of Commerce have reviewed Executive Order No. 122-20, COVID-19 Local Order – Amending and Restating Order dated Sept. 29, 2020 as a Board of Health Regulation.

While we understand that the County is responding to an increased risk of COVID-19 and commend the County Executive for his efforts to keep our community safe and healthy, we also know that many of our restaurants will not survive at 25% indoor capacity

We have two major concerns with the Order as presented.

Contact Tracing – As this is a new requirement in Montgomery County, requiring name and contact information for each patron will be burdensome to carryout. Without a major educational campaign about the requirement, patrons may be reluctant to share this personal information. Restaurant owners and staff will be faced with one more challenge to keeping their doors open.

We also are concerned about what will be done with this information. Logistically, how will it be used? If someone who attended a specific restaurant contracts COVID-19, how will the restaurant be notified? Once the restaurant is notified, what is their responsibility for notifying other patrons? Would the restaurant turn the information over to the County to complete the contact tracing or would the restaurant be responsible for contacting other patrons? Again, without a comprehensive contact tracing program in place it seems incongruous to focus solely on restaurant patrons. Why not everyone who goes into the grocery store or congregates for a religious service?

- *We recommend the requirement for contact tracing for restaurant patrons be removed.*

Implementation Date – Restaurants, in particular, have had a very difficult time adjusting to the pandemic. The County Council and County Executive have recognized the tremendous obstacles facing this industry. We've just spent the past four or five months getting restaurants back on their feet. A lot of time, energy, and money has been spent to help restaurants survive. It is unfair to ask them to pivot, yet again, without any warning.

- *We recommend the implementation be delayed for at least a week after the Order has been approved by Council and after the restaurants have been notified directly as to the required changes.*

Thank you for your consideration.

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