

Oppose Senate Bill 839

**Before the Senate Finance Committee
of the
Maryland General Assembly
Hearing on SB 839
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Written Testimony in Opposition to Senate Bill 839

**John M. Kelly
Bethesda, Maryland**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on Maryland Senate Bill 839 (SB 839). There are practical concerns about the bill that are important such as cost, security and related matters. But assumptions underlying the bill and their implications are of greater concern and need to be addressed. I will focus my comments on them.

The bill proposes to facilitate the use of COVID-19 vaccine passports and by doing so it implicitly accepts, takes for granted, that the Federal and the state's COVID-19 policies of the past two years were prudent and successful. It effectively sanctions them and proposes a way to further implement them. It provides mortar for the bricks of the policies. However, if there are serious flaws in the policies, facilitating their implementation will have serious negative effects for civil liberties and public health.

To help understand the bill's deeper implications the terms used in its title need to be clarified. The terms "voluntary" and "passports" are largely contradictory and distract attention from questionable aspects of the bill. Something voluntarily is freely chosen or undertaken whereas a passport entails a requirement that an individual may or may not have agreed to in the absence the requirement.

The *voluntary* aspect of the bill is that a person can choose between a mobile device or a paper document to verify that he or she received the COVID-19 vaccine. However, allowing a person access to a public venue based on her or his vaccination status is an entirely different matter. The choice is no longer voluntary, based on the simple desire of the person to enter or not enter a public venue solely on her or his own volition. The *voluntary choice* comes down to how a person wants her or his civil liberties infringed upon, by way of a mobile application or by a paper document.

Under the guises of being voluntary and convenient, the bill implicitly sanctions and explicitly facilitates invasions of personal privacy, in general, and discrimination against the un-vaccinated, in particular. Never before in the United States have persons been required to show proof of her or his vaccination status before entering a grocery store, restaurant, theater or other public venues. The seemingly innocuous proposal for a mobile application for COVID-19 passports implicitly says that it is acceptable to have such passports as a permanent feature of daily life in America.

Further, the mobile application for proof of COVID-19 vaccination is being proposed at a time when other other states and nations around the world are dropping vaccination and masking requirements. New York City, the first major city to impose vaccination and masking requirements, is planning to soon rescind them. Vaccinations, vaccination passports and masking have failed to prevent vaccinated persons from COVID-19 infections and transmission of the virus. So while most jurisdictions are eliminating restrictions, SB 839 is “swimming against the current in the wrong destination.”

In addition, by facilitating the use of vaccine passports SB 839 implicitly endorses a vaccine that has a highly questionable, even alarming, safety record. The evidence that has emerged in the past year on the safety of COVID-19 vaccines is sufficient to oppose any

measure that directly or indirectly encourages its use absent open, uncensored scientific investigation and debate.

For the United States, the Center for Disease Control's (CDC) vaccine injury reporting system (Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System) provides evidence that COVID-19 injuries and deaths are neither anecdotal nor rare. For the year 2021, it reported less than three (3) thousand non-COVID-19 vaccine adverse events compared to almost 800 thousand for COVID-19 vaccines. Thirty-six (36) deaths from non-COVID-19 vaccines were reported compared to 12,635 deaths from COVID-19 vaccines.

From 2011 through 2020 reported vaccine adverse events ranged between 25 thousand and 49 thousand per year. However, in 2021 when COVID-19 vaccines were introduced, reported adverse effects soared to 798 thousand. Reported vaccine deaths ranged between 120 and 183 for the ten-year period, but in 2021 after COVID-19 vaccines were introduced deaths shot up to 12,635.

It is widely acknowledged that vaccine adverse events are vastly under-reported. The most conservative estimate concludes they are under-reported by thirty times. Consequently, the number of adverse events for the COVID-19 vaccine in the year 2021 is closer to 24 million, and for deaths closer to 380 thousand.

The magnitudes of adverse events for COVID-19 vaccines compared to adverse events for non-COVID-19 vaccines in the official data are clear warnings that something is seriously wrong that *cries out* for investigation. Even seemingly innocuous proposals like SB 839 that facilitate COVID-19 vaccine requirements should be opposed, especially now that the pandemic is over.

Rather than the General Assembly spending time and resources promoting vaccine passports, it would be better to initiate a thorough review and investigation of the

effectiveness of the state's response to the pandemic and of federal policies that the state felt compelled to follow.

One of the most important functions of legislative bodies is oversight of the executive branches of government to assure they do not overstep their authority. During the past two years the Congress has not exercised rigorous oversight of Federal executive agencies' COVID-19 policies. Nor have most state legislatures made their respective executive agencies accountable for the unprecedented restrictions imposed.

I respectfully request that the members and committees of the General Assembly vigorously exercise their oversight responsibilities and have Maryland state executive agencies explain and justify the COVID policies it implemented which infringed upon basic civil liberties and may have had severe and long-lasting effects on public and economic health.

It is time for the legislature to *find out for itself*. Fundamental questions that need to be asked and which can start us down the correct investigatory road are: Were the restrictions implemented needed?; Did we need a vaccine? Did we need to attempt to vaccinate everybody?; What were the costs to our civil liberties, physical and mental health, our communal sense as a nation, and our economic welfare?; Did the risk justify the cost?; Did the risk justify the economic wreckage?; Why COVID-19 patients *not* allowed to make their own decisions about treatment in consultation with their personal physicians?; Why was there blatant censorship of scientific debate about public health policies to respond to the pandemic?; and Why were lifesaving effective treatments for persons with COVID-19 suppressed?

