

**Open Letter Response to  
USM Chancellor Perman's August 2022 Covid-19 Vaccine Mandates Statement**  
(<https://www.usmd.edu/newsroom/news/2264>)

In August 2022, Chancellor Perman published an updated USM Covid-19 Vaccine Mandate Policy statement (link above) that confirmed the end of the system-wide Covid-19 vaccine mandate. The end of the system-wide mandate, however, did not end mandates at universities and schools in the USM. Rather, each school in the system was allowed to establish their own covid mandates and policies. As a result, there are widely divergent Covid-19 mandate policies throughout USM institutions. These include no mandates, residential-only student mandates, mandates for all students but not faculty or staff, and mandates for all, including requirements for prospective students and their families to show proof of vaccination or negative test in order to tour the school.

In his August 2022 statement, Chancellor Perman bases the success of the system-wide mandate and postulates returning to the USM mandate as a policy model for the future by asserting "...my opinion is bolstered by a new study from the National Bureau of Economic Research. This study suggests colleges' vaccination mandates had a substantial effect on surrounding county-level COVID infections and deaths, likely reducing total U.S. deaths by 5 percent over the course of the fall 2021 semester."

Thus, based on a single working paper from the NBER (<https://www.nber.org/papers/w30303>), as of November 2022 and without validated and publicly available substantiation, mandates persist at some USM schools. Further, there has been no change to the assertion of the mandates' "success" claims. Finally, USM has not publicly communicated efforts to further identify or address adverse collateral impacts of the USM Covid-19 Mandates.

The Chancellor's reasoning and continued support for vaccine mandates is faulty for numerous reasons:

**1. Perman's evidence is tenuous.**

In his August 2022 statement, Chancellor Perman justifies the decision to mandate based on his "opinion" that college vaccine mandates protected the communities surrounding USM schools. He bases his "opinion" on a working paper written by National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) staff. Working papers are NOT peer-reviewed, nor disseminated to the public, and not easily found using search engines.

According to individuals with training in policy, statistics, and research design, including USM-based faculty members, there are notable flaws in the NBER working paper, including:

- Omission of county socio-demographics such as age and nursing facility presence
- Failure to assess counties which had 4-year schools with AND without mandates
- Time period chosen represents one of the lowest COVID-19 case trends during the pandemic
- Failure to include vaccination mandates applicable to faculty and staff of the academic communities

A significant limitation of the paper, acknowledged by the authors, is its inability to document impacts (first-stage effects) on the college students themselves. These include benefits, including hospitalizations and deaths averted, and, more importantly, the physical and mental harms

associated with mandated vaccination. It is the college students, NOT the surrounding “spillover” community, who bear the risks of mandated vaccination policies.

And these risks are real. Although college students are at extremely low risk of suffering adversely from COVID-19 infection, they are at very high risk of vaccine harms, including:

- Myocarditis/pericarditis
- Menstrual and reproductive issues
- Clotting
- Strokes

These and other physical, mental, and emotional harms associated with the vaccine and the USM vaccine mandates are documented in a survey of USM parents, alumni, students, and staff and discussed further in section 3.

## **2. The vaccines are ineffective.**

Most importantly, we now know that the vaccine DOES NOT PREVENT TRANSMISSION, as acknowledged by the CDC and others.

While the mandates were initially justified by the University System of Maryland on the assumption that vaccination protected against infection and prevented transmission, it is now well known the vaccines do neither. These scientific facts are acknowledged by the CDC, the FDA, HHS, the WHO, health ministries and medical researchers around the world, and are confirmed by vaccine manufacturers. For example:

In an NBC report from Dec. 3 2020, Albert Bourla, Pfizer Chairman and CEO, said it’s still unknown whether people who’ve been vaccinated could still be carriers of the virus or able to transmit it to others. “I think this is something that needs to be examined. We are not certain about that right now,” he said. [Ref](#)

On December 11, 2020, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) made this statement when it issued emergency approval for the Pfizer Covid vaccine, noting there was no “evidence that the vaccine prevents transmission of SARS-CoV-2 from person to person.” [Ref](#)

When the World Health Organization issued information in January 2021 on the use of the Pfizer vaccine, they stated there was “not yet any evidence of the effect of the vaccine on virus transmission.” [Ref](#)

During an October 2022 European Parliament meeting, Janine Small, President of international markets at Pfizer, confirmed the Covid-19 vaccine was not tested for its effect on transmission before release. [Ref](#)

## **3. Mandates are coercive and unethical.**

From an ethical perspective, in his August 2022 statement, Chancellor Perman suggests college students are a shield to protect others, including family members (on some campuses, students were quarantined on campus and not allowed to go home) and the broader community.

Yet college students bear the brunt of the policy's consequences, including vaccine adverse effects, quarantining policies, mental health problems, lock-downs, and poor-quality virtual courses.

A year after the policies were instituted, there are no known system-sponsored or individual campus assessments of the mandates on USM constituencies. To address this deficiency, several USM parents, alumni, and faculty decided to conduct a survey representative of the thoughts, opinions and experiences among a diverse range of USM stakeholders with educational and financial interests. While not fully generalizable, the findings demonstrate the need for further attention from USM and individual campus COVID-19 response leadership.

The survey results were reported to USM and school leadership in the USM Mandate Impact Report. ([USM Mandate Impact Report](#)) The Mandate Impact Report was disseminated to the USM Chancellor, Regents and school Presidents on March 7, 2022. To date, there have been no responses. Since January 2022, numerous requests to present at a BOR meeting have been submitted. These requests have been denied due to not being agenda items.

Survey findings include:

- Of the 307 respondents across the USM campuses, the majority (80%) indicated they suffered physical and psychological harm from the mandates
- Of 142 student and employee respondents who chose to comment on the physical and/or psychological harms they experienced, respondents specifically mentioned the following impacts a total of 95 times across all surveys:
  - Depression
  - Anxiety
  - Stress
  - Isolation
  - Ostracization
  - Vaccine injury
- Hundreds of comments came in through the survey (paraphrased):
  - If a student missed a required COVID-19 test (2x/week for unvaccinated only), their campus access was turned off and student had no access to shelter or food (for days). Other students were placed on academic probation.
  - Exempted Individuals were required to quarantine with each close contact, including with vaccinated individuals who became symptomatic with COVID. "Even though I was negative each of these times and am COVID recovered, I had to miss six weeks of instruction (or 1/5<sup>th</sup> of classes and labs). I missed a tremendous amount of work, resulting in a drop from my previously maintained 4.0 GPA to a 3.7 GPA; harming my post-graduate school plans."
  - Consent or be fired. With policies specific to the exempted (testing, masking, restrictions). "I have never felt this type of discrimination before."
  - "I believe that I am a victim of vaccine injury that caused permanent disability that I only received in order to keep my job. I also had covid immediately after being "fully

vaccinated" whereas I had been exposed many times prior and never had covid. I believe the vaccine made me more susceptible to covid and either the vaccine and/or covid caused me to have a permanent life changing auto-immune condition. I was 100% healthy and in excellent physical condition prior to this."

- "I suffered a physical vaccine injury that has continued to affect my day-to-day life."
- Loss of smell after receiving mRNA injection.
- "I ... got myocarditis from the vaccine. ... since getting myocarditis from the Pfizer vaccine it has been hard to exercise."
- "I had a violent allergic reaction and was sick for a few weeks after receiving it (the vaccine). I couldn't do my schoolwork effectively or perform my job duties as well while I was sick."

Findings from this small survey highlight the real harms from the USM mandates on Maryland constituents' ability to access jobs and educational opportunities, as well as real physical and emotional adverse collateral impacts from the mandates and the vaccine itself. To date, these harms have NOT been acknowledged by USM leadership or by individual campuses. There is no estimate regarding how wide-spread these harms are across our 200,000+ USM students, faculty, and staff.

Peer-reviewed publications also call attention to the ethics and adverse collateral impacts of mandates. One was recently published in the BMJ. When it comes to college vaccination mandates, there are risk-benefit considerations that include age-stratification for risk and emerging data on vaccines, especially as it pertains to vaccine effectiveness against transmission and effectiveness in those with prior infection. The ethical considerations include transparency, informed consent, potential net expected individual harm, proportionate public health benefit, failure of reciprocity, and wider social harms. These considerations are discussed in the prestigious BMJ Journal of Medical Ethics (Bardosh K, Krug A, Jamrozik E et al. **COVID-19 vaccine boosters for young adults: a risk benefit assessment and ethical analysis of mandate policies at universities**. December 5, 2022; [Ref](#)). This peer-reviewed publication concluded:

"Based on public data provided by the CDC,<sup>19</sup> we estimate that in the fall of 2022 at least 31 207–42 836 young adults aged 18–29 years must be boosted with an mRNA vaccine to prevent one Omicron-related COVID-19 hospitalisation over 6 months. Given the fact that this estimate does not take into account the protection conferred by prior infection or a risk adjustment for comorbidity status, this should be considered a conservative and optimistic assessment of benefit. Our estimate shows that university COVID-19 vaccine mandates are likely to cause net expected harms to young healthy adults—for each hospitalisation averted we estimate approximately 18.5 SAEs and 1430–4626 disruptions of daily activities—that is not outweighed by a proportionate public health benefit. Serious COVID-19 vaccine-associated harms are not adequately compensated for by current US vaccine injury systems. As such, these severe infringements of individual liberty and human rights are ethically unjustifiable."

"Mandates are also associated with wider social harms. The fact that such policies were implemented despite controversy among experts and without updating the sole publicly available risk-benefit analysis<sup>19</sup> to the current Omicron variants nor submitting the methods to

public scrutiny suggests a profound lack of transparency in scientific and regulatory policy making. These findings have implications for mandates in other settings such as schools, corporations, healthcare systems and the military. Policymakers should repeal COVID-19 vaccine mandates for young adults immediately...”

In conclusion, we suggest Chancellor Perman, the Board of Regents, and other USM leaders at individual campuses peruse the wider, peer-reviewed, published scientific literature on the vaccines and the effectiveness—and harms—of vaccine mandates.

"Opinion" is not science. It is incumbent on Chancellor Perman and USM leadership to provide sound epidemiological and other scientific evidence for mandates and related policies. As well, it is imperative that USM leadership demonstrate transparency of their decision-making, including revelation of USM and school specific data and pre-established metrics used to inform their decisions. Proper, continuous, and verifiable evaluation using transparent data and measures is needed before making any claims to the past, current, or future use and success of USM Covid-19 Mandates.

We ask: How can Chancellor Perman point only to a scientifically flawed, unpublished working paper on mandates for a leaky and ineffective vaccine as the sole justification of past, current, and future USM Mandate policies? Without the provision of sound evidence and full transparency to the students, faculty, and staff within the USM system, USM Covid 19 mandates are unethical, dangerous, and must be repealed.

Yours truly,

Concerned USM Students, Faculty, Staff, Parents, Alumni, and Community