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MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL

ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

October 29, 2021

Marc Elrich, County Executive
Montgomery County
101 Monroe St, 2nd Floor
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear County Executive Elrich,

Coming out of the initial COVID-19 lockdowns in 2020, we all worked swiftly and creatively to help restaurateurs and retailers manage through some of the worse effects of the pandemic. One of the more successful policies was introducing a network of streateries—outdoor dining on streets closed to vehicle traffic—all across the County. I am writing to urge you to keep the streateries in place and to develop options to make them permanent.

Beginning in the summer of 2020, the County, working with local businesses, property owners, and residents, made public space available for outdoor dining and gathering in Wheaton, Silver Spring, and Bethesda. Wheaton's streatery encompasses Price Ave between Fern and Elkin Streets. Silver Spring's streatery is Newell St., adjacent to East-West Hwy. Bethesda's streateries are on the southern portion of Woodmont Ave. and parts of Cordell and Norfolk Avenues. There are also municipality-supported streateries in Rockville and Takoma Park.

The streateries provided a much needed—and safe—space for commerce, dining, and gathering during a time in which there are strict indoor capacity limits. These streateries continued successfully even after indoor capacity limits were lifted—because they provided safe and vibrant places that folks want to visit. I have heard from many of the local restaurants and neighbors who want to see these streateries continue indefinitely. An online petition to make the Wheaton streatery permanent has nearly 700 signatures. These streateries are so popular, not only because they have directly helped the restaurants but also because they have been so well-integrated into the downtown areas, generating no widespread or serious ongoing

complaints. This is a testament to the thoughtfulness and diligence of the County's collaboration with the businesses.

However, the streateries' continued success rests on the certainty that they will continue, as the businesses and the County consider longer term investment and other related business decisions to make these places even more attractive, lively, and functional. For example, the County should replace some of the clearly temporary equipment, such as plastic barriers, with nicer features that accomplish the same goal but create an attractive environment.

Accordingly, I request that your administration formally announce an extension of the road closures that make these streateries possible at least through the end of 2022, and that your administration formulate options and considerations to make each streatory permanent. The Council could then review those options and work with the executive branch to make a decision. Thank you for your support of streateries in the past, and I look forward to continuing our close work together to do the best we can for our local businesses by continuing this critical policy.

Sincerely,



Hans Riemer
Chair, Planning, Housing & Economic Development Committee

CC: County Councilmembers
Christopher Conklin, Director, Montgomery County Department of Transportation
Jacob Newman, Director, Silver Spring Regional Service Center
Peter Fosselman, Director, Bethesda-ChevyChase Regional Services Center
Luisa Cardona de Vence, Director, Mid-County Regional Services Center