



March 4th Testimony

DC Health Argument #1: *Instructors yelling causes droplets to carry further, thus increasing risk*

DCFA Counterpoints

- This is mitigated with PPE equipment, specifically facemasks. Double facemasks provide an added layer of safety.
- The CDC does not support this assertion. On the contrary, the CDC advises wearing facemasks, enforcing physical distancing (aka limiting class size), and improving ventilation.
- The CDC also acknowledges that outbreak data among exercise groups is limited to the time period before facemask use was widely recommended.
- It is widely accepted that speaking loudly or yelling can produce significant respiratory droplets that are capable of spreading the virus. Case studies have highlighted particular risk with choirs. However, the risk is mitigated when wearing a facemask and standing at least 6 feet away from other individuals. The Delaware Division of Public Health has allowed choirs to operate with these mitigation efforts since October 2020.
- DC Health could advise or require instructors to speak in a lower voice and refrain from yelling.

DC Health Argument #2: *People breathing heavily and in unison carries with it greater risk*

DCFA Counterpoints

- Again, this is mitigated with PPE equipment, specifically facemasks. Double facemasks provide an added layer of safety.
- DC has allowed indoor exercise on cardio equipment in gyms since reopening in June 2020 without issue and without any Outbreaks as the data from the Coronavirus DC website indicates. We've seen this in many other jurisdictions that track the same data (i.e. Virginia, Maryland, Louisiana, Colorado, Massachusetts, Vermont, New York, New Jersey, Oregon, and Washington). Cardio exercise involves people breathing heavily and in unison, the same as in an indoor group exercise class.
- Additionally, almost every other jurisdiction (including VA & MD) still allows indoor group exercise with nearly identical data. This presents an overwhelming amount of national and international data that indoor group exercise is safe just like gyms are safe when following the proper mitigation efforts. The data also proves that the most significant mitigation efforts are facemasks, social distancing, and proper ventilation...all of which have been regulated in fitness

facilities since reopening (FYI, fitness facilities have always had building code requirements for ventilation that greatly outperform almost every other business or type of building).

DC Health Argument #3: *The two outbreaks - in Chicago and Hawaii - are data points that support their concern about group fitness studios.*

DCFA Counterpoints

- Chicago - This occurred in August 2020 at a poorly ventilated studio in the basement of an old building in the south side of Chicago. Class participants were not wearing masks nor were they social distancing. The outbreak occurred because they failed to observe what is now known as the BIG 3 (facemasks, physical distancing, proper ventilation).
- We would like to share more recent data with you from Chicago. In early November 2020, case and positivity rates were escalating in Chicago. On November 12th, the City added additional restrictions but DID NOT suspend indoor group exercise. Case and positivity rates decreased substantially while allowing indoor group exercise to continue. The same positive trends are present in countless other jurisdictions across the country and readily available on their websites.
- Hawaii – This outbreak occurred from an Instructor teaching classes in June 2020 at a poorly ventilated 400 sq ft studio. Again, class participants were not wearing masks nor were they social distancing. The result was a community spread to other individuals who again were not observing the BIG 3 (no facemasks, no physical distancing, congregating in a poorly ventilated room).
- These are dated incidents, not studies. Again, CDC has acknowledged a lack of Outbreak data among exercise groups since facemasks were widely recommended. Does DC Health actually believe that the extremely isolated incidents in Chicago and Hawaii occurred regardless of any mitigation efforts? If so, we would point out the CNN Article from November 19th, 2020 where a studio Instructor in Blacksburg, VA exposed 50 class participants to COVID-19, but not one of them contracted it. Professor Linsey Marr from Virginia Tech University studied the building and found that proper ventilation and 10 feet of physical distancing prevented class participants from contracting COVID-19. More specifically, she stated that “we don’t see outbreaks above a certain (ventilation) threshold.”
- Further, why is DC Health looking at such anecdotal and outdated data when we have an overwhelming amount of data right here in DC as well as with our neighbors in VA & MD. DC had ~6 months of indoor group exercise without a single Outbreak from reopening in June until the restriction on indoor group exercise in November. That success was due to our mitigation efforts, both those mandated by DC and our own best practices, health screenings, contact tracing, etc. Why has DC Health disregarded data of such a massive sample size?
- One mistake is an understandable accident. Two mistakes is a pattern of behavior. This is the second time DC Health has relied on anecdotal data or an absence of data. The first was when

DC Health made the initial decision to suspend indoor group exercise in late November 2020. DC Health publicly admitted in front of DCFA Members and representatives from the Executive Office of the Mayor (EOM) that they had a lack of data and substance when making this decision/recommendation. The only datapoint mentioned was a reference to an incident at a South Korea dance studio on February 15th, 2020 with no masks and no social distancing...almost a year prior and before the public health emergency & any mitigation efforts.

- We respect that DC Health made these decisions with the best intentions and genuine concern for public safety. Having said that, the decision was objectively incorrect, not based on data or science, and is crippling the very people they are trying to protect.

DC Health Argument #4: *A lack of specific data saying group fitness is safe as opposed to gyms in general.*

DCFA Counterpoints

- The specific data is overwhelming and readily available right here in our backyard. Perhaps the specific data is so massive in volume that DC Health cannot see the forest for the trees. We will provide you with two very specific examples.
- Example #1 – Indoor group exercise in the District of Columbia from June 2020 – November 2020. No Outbreaks and proper mitigation efforts in place. (Source: Coronavirus DC website and DCFA contact tracing).
- Example #2 – Indoor group exercise at our fitness facilities throughout Northern Virginia from June 2020 – March 2021. No Outbreaks and proper mitigation efforts in place. (Source: Virginia Coronavirus website and DCFA contact tracing).
- Asserting a lack of specific data and failure to look at the data available are two very different things. Data is not subjective...its existence is not something we choose whether or not to believe in...it is not fake news. Data is science and data is fact. We have a Medical Advisory Board serving us in keeping DC residents safe.
- We have health screenings at check-in and take the body temperature of every individual that enters our facilities. We have contact tracing...we know when everyone arrives, when they leave, and how to contact them immediately. We have longstanding building code requirements for proper ventilation with the ability to change over the air up to 30x/hour. We require and enforce facemasks. We require and enforce social distancing. We sanitize all equipment after every use and have taught our customers to do the same. No one shares equipment in indoor group exercise classes. Our employees are fully trained to ensure compliance and safety. Our international trade association (IHRSA) has created an Active & Safe Commitment that sets the standards for protecting our customers from infectious disease.

We are an informed industry, we know our data, and we know how to keep people safe. We'd like to bring you into our world a little further and help you understand the Top 10 Reasons WHY Indoor Group Exercise is safe.

1) Healthy People – The healthier the person, the less they are at risk and it's a scientific fact that exercise boosts the immune system.

2) Air Flow – We've been dealing with sweat & respiration for decades. Our systems are over-engineered to extract and filter pathogens.

3) No Close Contact for Extended Periods – We demarcate path of travel and workout spaces.

4) Facemasks – We have members/clients, not customers. Thus, we have a controlled community with optimal communication to educate and enforce.

5) Equipment Spacing & Stations – We control where people go and how long they stay there. All equipment is single use by design.

6) Single Person Check-in – Our members/clients come in one at a time and maintain physical distancing.

7) Great Hygiene – Our facilities have always been based on cleanliness as a core principle of our business model.

8) Check-in Systems – We control capacity, manage contact tracing, and enforce safety protocols.

9) Members/Clients – Not customers. We know who they are, how to contact them, and how to gain their compliance before they enter the facility.

10) Business Model – Our businesses are based on recurring, repeat revenue. Our members/clients will not come back if we cannot keep them safe.