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Open Forum: Wiley's campaign should set better example

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We write as citizens of Frederick County to express our concerns over serious public health violations. Republican candidate Bill Wiley has, for months, been ignoring the advice of Virginia's own health officials concerning the once-every-hundred-years pandemic that has, to date, killed over 3,000 Virginians. Virginia topped 150,000 COVID cases on Saturday.

As America's health professionals and scientists have been telling us for months, this deadly virus can only be contained if we ALL practice social distancing, wear masks, wash our hands, and stay home as much as possible. Every person who chooses to ignore this advice puts, not just themselves, but ALL OF THE REST OF US in danger. While Democrat Irina Khanin, a doctor's wife, has run her campaign following this advice, Republican Bill Wiley has continued to have potential super-spreader events where large groups of people congregate, both indoors and out. Neither Mr. Wiley nor his supporters wear masks. There is no attempt to practice the social distancing that Virginia recommends. And then these people go out and buy groceries, pump gas, visit their doctors, and infect the rest of us. Simply put, Bill Wiley and his supporters act as if OUR health does not matter. They act as if the health of Virginia's doctors and nurses, teachers, delivery people, and the retirees - who make up an increasing percentage of Frederick County's population and economy - doesn't matter. And Mr. Wiley, not only as a candidate, but as an elected official in Frederick County, ought to be setting a better example.

Not to excuse Mr. Wiley's prior behavior, but his actions at an event this past weekend, publicized on his Facebook page as "a huge crowd in Front Royal," show an escalating reckless disregard for the safety of Frederick County residents. Just this week we learned that President Trump, who has refused to wear a mask and who, like Mr. Wiley has held large events that violate local public health standards, has been struck with COVID. His wife and many of the people who attended his recent super-spreader event in the Rose Garden have also been struck with COVID. The President and others have been hospitalized. Surely if Mr. Wiley couldn't understand the advice from America's scientists, doctors, and public health officials before, he can understand it now. And if he can't, he doesn't belong in elected office - either in Frederick County or in Richmond.

We call upon Mr. Wiley to publicly commit to stop holding potential super-spreader events, to wear a mask, and to practice responsible social distancing between now and Nov. 3rd. If he refuses, he's let us know what kind of elected official he is — and would be in Richmond.

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