Vaccine Passports Have Arrived in New York. Here's How to Fight Back.

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> *New York partnered with IBM to launch Excelsior Pass. The digital pass is portrayed as part of the state's "safe reopening" plan, but is it really just a plan by Big Tech, Big Pharma and the government to commercialize personal health data?*

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On March 26, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced the state had partnered with IBM to launch Excelsior Pass, a digital health pass billed by state officials as part of New York's "safe reopening" plan.

The pass is designed to provide a "free, fast and secure" way for New Yorkers to show proof of COVID-19 vaccination in order to gain entry to major sporting events, theatre and arts performances, concert halls and wedding venues.

How does Excelsior Pass work?

Excelsior Pass is a free app that can be downloaded on phones. It allows users to display a QR code verifying either proof of COVID vaccination or proof of a negative COVID test result.

Venues use a companion app to scan the user's QR code which then generates either a green checkmark or a red X, depending on vaccination status or COVID test result. Users have to show

a photo ID with their name and birth date to verify the pass belongs to them.

New Yorkers have the option to show alternate proof of vaccination or test results, for example, a different mobile application or paper form, to gain entrance to the business or venue. Upon entrance, users are still [required](#)to maintain social distancing, abide by mask guidelines and use proper hand hygiene.

Initially designed to allow entry to major venues such as Madison Square Garden in New York City, Times Union Center in Albany and other large venues for weddings, concerts and special events, the pass was later expanded for use at smaller arts, entertainment and event venues throughout the state.

IBM has history of collecting personal data

This isn't the first time IBM's technology has played a key role in identifying and segregating people based on their health information.

The New York Times best-selling book by Edwin Black, "[IBM and the Holocaust](#)," details the chilling role IBM's past president, Thomas J. Watson, played while serving the Third Reich for 12 years.

According to Black, IBM was intimately involved in providing the punch cards and tabulating machines that helped Adolf Hitler carry out his ultimate plan. While this is not a well-known aspect of IBM's history, the company has never denied any of the facts outlined in Black's book. The book details evidence based on more than 20,000 documents from seven countries, including internal IBM correspondence, memos from the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Department of Justice, and from concentration camps.

Black's book chronicles how IBM played a pivotal role in the Holocaust, in not only the identification and tabulation of

Jews, but also their expulsion from society, including the confiscation of their property, ghettoization, deportation and ultimately their extermination.

How will IBM's role differ this time?

IBM used its [Digital Health Pass technology](#), which is part of the tech company's [Watson Works](#), to develop the Excelsior Pass. The pass is built on IBM's own blockchain technology, allowing organizations and businesses to verify health credentials of individuals, employees, customers and other end users based on predetermined criteria specified by an organization, state or business.

IBM claims privacy is central and the data is secured and verifiable. The company also says the encrypted information is protected on the user's digital wallet, and the user has "complete control" over how and with whom they share the information.

But how is sharing personal health data with [Big Tech](#) considered private? If someone is refused entrance to the workplace, a business or venue based on the Excelsior Pass, the person's status would become known to colleagues at work, or strangers nearby at a social venue.

And what will IBM do with this data? How do we know IBM won't turn over the data to government officials or sell it to other entities?

Data security concerns, human rights infringement

Requiring proof of a vaccine or a negative test result is a violation of fundamental human rights and promotes segregation based on unproven and [experimental](#) medical interventions. Let's evaluate a few key factors:

- The [COVID vaccine](#) is an experimental treatment that at this time has only [Emergency Use Authorization](#). COVID

vaccines [have yet to obtain-licensing and approval](#) from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). It is illegal for any government to [mandate](#) or coerce the public to take an experimental [medical intervention that is liability-free](#) and lacks long-term safety studies. This form of coercion to gain entrance to a business or venue violates the [tenants of informed consent](#).

- The COVID vaccine has [yet to prove](#) in any clinical trials that it can stop person-to-person transmission. Using the Excelsior Pass to show proof of having the vaccine to enter a public venue, business or workspace is not proof of lower risk of transmission to others.
- PCR tests have been proven to have high rates of [false positives](#). A study conducted in April 2020, showed when PCR tests have a cycle threshold around 33 they lead to false positives 80% of the time. PCR tests cycled above 34 can reach 100% false positives. Yet the FDA was [recommending](#) PCR tests cycled around 40 times. Excelsior Pass will grant access to businesses and venues based on proof of negative test results, however the methodology is inaccurate and based upon a [faulty and broken system of testing.](#)
- While Cuomo touts the Excelsior Pass as a way to return to normal, the pass comes with the same restrictions that have been in place this entire time. Per the [NYS guidelines](#), Excelsior pass holders are still required to wear facial coverings and social distance.

Slippery slope

Once Excelsior Pass rolls out, it will likely expand to include more businesses throughout New York and could expand to more states. Will New Yorkers be forced to show their Excelsior Pass to shop at their local groceries stores? Will New York follow in the [footsteps](#) of Los Angeles by mandating the COVID vaccine and use of a [tracking app](#) to attend school?

This appears to be a quid pro quo among [Big Tech](#), [Big](#)

[Pharma](#) and government that likely will lead to the commercialization of personal health data — and it could easily expand to other vaccine requirements in the future.

Many people are not aware of the [Healthy People 2030 agenda](#), which ultimately will include an aggressive [adult vaccine catch-up schedule](#). It's easy to see how state government officials and businesses could easily add other vaccines to the Excelsior Pass for children and adults as necessary criteria for entry. This could lead to a systematic threat to our right to travel freely and could interfere with the ability to earn a living and conduct commerce.

Inching closer to a surveillance state

Yesterday in New York, [bill S75](#), sponsored by Sen. Brad Hoylman, passed in the Senate Health Committee. Hoylman is also the author of the bill that repealed religious exemptions in 2019, and he has proposed legislation to mandate the [HPV vaccine](#) and annual [flu vaccines](#) for school children.

His most recent bill would require college students to get the COVID-19 vaccine.

S75 requires medical professionals who administer vaccines to patients 19 and older to enter their vaccine records in state-operated immunization registries which then provide the data to the New York State Department of Health or the New York City Department of Health (for providers treating patients in New York City).

Previously, the sharing of personal health information for adult vaccine status with the state was optional. By making it mandatory, the bill violates New Yorkers' right to keep health information private.

[Hoylman said](#) during the Senate Health Committee hearing " … this is important data that our health departments need as we battle COVID. This is really a matter of life or death, if we

don't get this information into public officials' hands. This is not about consent or personal freedoms, this is about making certain that everyone is protected from this ravaging pandemic."

The bill passed straight down party lines. Nine of the ten Democrats on the committee voted yes (with one Democratic member not present) and all five Republicans on the committee voted no.

The bill will now move forward to a full floor vote in the Senate, and the Assembly Health Committee will also vote on the companion bill. No dates have been scheduled yet but both votes are imminent.

This bill removes the right to privacy for vaccine status for adults in New York and confiscates personal health data in the name of "public health." Any database collecting this information could be commoditized for broader use and will lead to targeting certain populations who aren't receiving vaccines with efforts to coerce compliance and increase uptake rates.

A look at how health information has been commoditized in other countries and tabulated as a "social credit score" provides a glimpse into a dystopian future, where a person's ability to participate in society is dependent on pharmaceutical consumption and participation in programs that track and trace every move and commoditize personal data for the benefit of corporations.

What can we do about it?

Together, we have the power to make a difference with our actions. Here are four actions we can take:

1. **Boycott businesses requiring the Excelsior Pass.** Refuse to shop, eat, or participate in any events from business that require the use of the Excelsior Pass. If it hurts

a company's bottom line, the company will take notice. Send letters addressed to the heads of corporations and businesses you frequent in New York to put them on notice that should they require the Excelsior Pass in the future, you will boycott their business. Find our template letter [here](#) to send to companies or businesses requiring mandatory COVID-19 vaccine or COVID-19 tests.

2. **Sign this petition.** [Sign this petition](#) stating you refuse to take part in using New York's Excelsior Pass. Let Gov. Andrew Cuomo know this passport violates your rights. Even out-of-staters can sign — New York depends upon tourism.

3. **Sound off to your reps.** While the Excelsior Pass wasn't based on state legislation, it's still important for New York residents to share feedback with their state representatives. Cuomo, who has been [accused](#) of overreach and abuse of emergency powers during the pandemic, pushed out the digital health pass without any legislative process, public hearings or feedback. You can call, email and, if possible, visit the office of your state legislators. If you aren't sure who your reps are, please look up your state senator [here](#) and your assemblyperson [here](#).

Ask your state lawmakers to oppose bills to mandate the COVID vaccine for New Yorkers. [A bill](#) was written to mandate the vaccine for virtually all New York citizens — adults and children — in the 2019-2020 legislative session, but has not yet been re-introduced for the 2020-2021 session. Hoylman recently [introduced a new bill](#) this legislative session that would make COVID-19 vaccines mandatory for post-secondary education. Let your state representatives know how these bills would affect your family (e.g. force you to move out of state, lose your job, lose the rights for your children to attend school, etc.).

Find out if your state representatives will support freedom of

choice when it comes to your personal health decisions. Ask them to support the [counterbill, which prohibits mandatory vaccines](#) and provides a vaccine bill of rights to respect constitutional rights of New York citizens, recently introduced by Assm. David DiPietro (R).

4. **Get loud on social media.** Let Cuomo, your state representatives and participating businesses know you refuse to use the Excelsior Pass. Share how this vaccine passport is an infringement of your privacy, [violation of informed consent](#) and your fundamental human rights. Let businesses know you will boycott them, as the Excelsior Pass is discriminatory, unethical and unconstitutional.

As President Biden and our federal government contemplate a vaccine passport on the national level, it's imperative to take action now. There are a [number of states](#) protecting civil liberties and maintaining choice. As of now, the governors of Florida, Texas, Utah, Idaho, Montana and Arizona have all passed legislation or issued executive orders prohibiting vaccine passports. The governors of Tennessee, Iowa and Georgia have stated their opposition.

Now is the time to keep the pressure on all states to preserve our fundamental liberties. In a very short period, we could see our country change into a surveillance state that revokes the very liberties and freedoms that our country was founded upon.

We face a critical time, where taking a stand and taking action is of utmost importance. Take the actions above and ask others to do the same.