



Written by [Jessica Marie Baumgartner](#) on March 29, 2021

New York Becomes First State to Implement Vaccine Pass as Biden Admin Working on National Version

On Friday, New York implemented the nation's first "[vaccine passport](#)" program. New Yorkers can now prove they have been vaccinated or have recently tested negative for COVID-19. This first approved certification is called the "Excelsior Pass."

Large venues in New York see this as a way to "get back to normal." Business can start resuming without government interference. Embattled New York Governor Andrew Cuomo champions this new system, which is being compared to an "airline boarding pass." The Excelsior Pass is a simple app that goes on one's phone and is used to scan a label.



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This new development, of course, comes just as the Biden administration has begun working on a public health initiative that includes aid from Vaccine Credentials Initiative, "a voluntary coalition of public and private organizations committed to empowering individuals with access to a trustworthy and verifiable copy of their vaccination records in digital or paper form using open, interoperable standards."

IBM Watson Health and other entities are launching their own [blockchain versions](#) of vaccine record programs to offer competition in a new market. Like Excelsior, the IBM version provides a downloadable app so users can obtain their records for verification at any time.

Such apps are being presented as a way to finally resume "normal" life, but for those who don't wish to be attached to a phone at all times, concerns about how government policies may change to include requiring these credentials in daily life have only mounted. There is no clause in the Constitution that allows for such government tracking or the requirement to prove health status.

Our right to privacy is also being threatened with these developments. Requirements to display the presence of medical conditions far more deadly than COVID may be added to this type of system if it did become the standard. For instance, what would keep governments from interfering in the daily lives of cancer patients or diabetics? Where would it end?

Also, how such a system would be secured from hackers is still unclear. When even banks and highly protected [government systems](#) have been hacked within the past year, the question of how this will interfere with [HIPAA privacy laws](#) remains unanswered.

Indeed, if the American people's information was constantly tracked and listed, then hacked, the information gathered could be used against us for nefarious purposes. This unprecedented idea of a "COVID pass" is being considered and/or implemented across the globe, and each country has a different policy in this regard. But in the United States, such a program is at odds with the founding



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concept of individual liberty protected by the Constitution.



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