

SENATOR JUSTIN READY



DELEGATE SUSAN W. KREBS
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THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY
LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT 5
CARROLL COUNTY

June 10, 2020

Dr. Karen B. Salmon
State Superintendent of Schools
Maryland Department of Education
Nancy S. Grasmick State Education Building
200 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Re: Lifting Restrictions on Childcare Centers

Dear Dr. Salmon,

As the Governor recently moved into Phase 2 of his plan, *Maryland Strong- The Road to Recovery*, and began opening more businesses to begin boosting our economy, we were sorry to learn that MSDE and the Governor's Order did not include an increase in the capacity at child care facilities. After speaking with constituents, child care providers and the Maryland Childcare Association, **we are writing to ask you to increase the capacity of children in child care facilities and to lift the restrictions on capacity at summer camps.**

Child care is an economic driver and foundation for working families. Marylanders cannot get back to work without adequate child care. Since the caps were placed on child care centers throughout the state, the science on the transmission of COVID-19 has changed considerably and we now know that the risks to children from the coronavirus are extremely small, especially relative to other risks. *The Foundation for Research on Equal Opportunity* projects that children under 15 are 6.83 to 20.07 times more likely to die of the flu or pneumonia than coronavirus and 128 times more likely to die of an accident. No one wants to endanger children, but the risks to children are not enough to justify the continuing destruction of lockdowns and limits on child care for our families. As for the transmission of the virus to teachers - Australia's *National Centre for Immunization Research and Surveillance* tracked COVID-19 cases in their schools and found that there were no cases of students passing the virus to teachers.

There is much new research that supports our move to reopen our economy and our schools.

Through many emails and conversations with constituents, we are finding that child care centers are not able to accommodate their usual families due to the capacity restrictions- this is adding stress to parents and our struggling child care centers. Child care providers who cared for many children prior to Covid-19 are not able to re-register these children now that parents are able to return to the workforce due to allowing only 10 people per room, including staff. The maximum size of 9 toddlers to a room, which includes one teacher, poses additional risks since it is very difficult to have only one set of eyes on a group of children creating the potential for a less safe environment.

More than half of child care providers in Maryland said that they may have to close their operations due to financial losses and restrictions from the COVID-19 pandemic. Even prior to the pandemic, many families struggled to find affordable child care and now they are in an even worse situation. The unintended consequences to this will force parents to use unsafe, unfamiliar and unregulated child care. How will our parents go back to work without the infrastructure available to care for their children?

Additionally, child care centers were receiving money to replace the tuition paid by families of essential workers and were promised this income replacement through June 30th - this is after long delays in receiving the money that they were promised weeks before. Recently, the Maryland Department of Education changed this date and ended payments as of June 8th.

We are requesting that Carroll County, along with all counties, have the ability to reinstate the maximum number of childcare participants and to follow the science in removing the financially burdensome restrictions and regulations that have been imposed. For example, what is the science behind requiring the cleaning of a playground after each group of children uses it? This is a very costly and onerous process for child care providers. The CDC has recently reversed their guidance and concluded that there is no evidence that the coronavirus is transmitted on surfaces- especially outside. We ask that you revisit all of the requirements put on child care facilities and remove ones that do not pose a significant threat to our children.

According to a study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) Pediatrics* found that “our results do not support the conjecture that children are a reservoir of unrecognized SARS-CoV-2 infections”. In addition, information posted last week by the *World Health Organization*, states that preliminary evidence shows that “while asymptomatic spread of COVID-19 can occur- it is very rare.

Carroll County has demonstrated low numbers of COVID-19 related hospitalizations and deaths in our community with the vast majority concentrated in congregant care facilities. By working with local leadership and the evolving science, we feel the ability to increase the numbers of children in child care facilities and summer camps will be readily accepted by the community and centers and will still provide the safety for our children that we all expect.

We support and request the following changes ASAP:

- Increasing the numbers in child care facilities to full capacity
- Revisit and justify the regulations which require physical distancing and other new public health guidelines
- Allow summer camps to proceed as in the past
- Restore funding child care for essential workers through June 30, 2020
- Follow the constantly evolving science as a basis for regulations

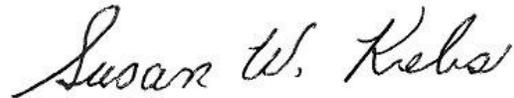
Parents need safe and trusted child care to return to work. Childcare Centers need to receive tuition or risk closing. **This is a crisis that needs to be addressed in order to save our child care system.**

We realize that any new decision would require each Child care facility to follow reasonable and rigorous health and safety guidance. Thank you for your consideration as we look forward to working with you and the administration as we move forward.

Sincerely,



Senator Justin Ready



Delegate Susan Krebs



Delegate April Rose



Delegate Haven Shoemaker