SENATOR JUSTIN READY

DELEGATE SUSAN W. KREBS
DELEGATE APRIL ROSE
DELEGATE HAVEN SHOEMAKER

THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY
LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT 5
CARROLL COUNTY

September 11, 2020

Sent Via Electronic Communication
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 Capacity Restrictions on Child Care

Dear Dr. Salmon,

Once again, all of the members of District 5 are writing to you asking for a lifting of the capacity restrictions on child care centers to make them consistent with COMAR. While we were very pleased with the strong guidance announced at the Governor's 8/27/20 press conference to insist that all local jurisdictions have a plan to return K-12 to in-person learning, we were disappointed that lifting the restrictions on child care centers was specifically left out to be considered at a later date- that time has come!

MSDE's own child care recovery document**, Maryland Together: Maryland's Recovery Plan for Child Care**, approved by the Governor and you, clearly states that child care can return to COMAR capacity in this final phase 3. The Governor's roadmap to recovery plan, **Maryland Strong: Roadmap to Recovery**, had child care in the medium risk category - we now have moved into the next step of high risk where more can gather indoors and outdoors in much higher numbers. Why were child care centers at only medium risk left out?

"PHASE 3: MSDE allows all child care programs to be open for all children with recommended health and safety precautions and social distancing measures. • EPCC program ends. • All child care programs allowed to resume normal operations or reopen and must follow guidelines set forth by the Office of Child Care" per Recovery Plan for Child Care.

Also, according to your recovery plan, 86% of respondents from day care centers were comfortable returning to full capacity in phase 3 of the Recovery Plan. We are in phase 3.

We have asked for an explanation of the science behind a 15 person per room restriction and have communicated that same question to the Maryland Department of Health- they defer us back to MSDE as the decision makers. Who exactly are you working with at MDH?

During the press conference you claimed that 75% of licensed child care facilities have reopened in Maryland. While this is factually correct, it is very misleading because most of the licensed day care facilities in our state are *family* child care, which have been functional at their full capacity of 8 for months, but *center based* child care has been capped at 14 children- for 3 years and up-plus one adult. COMAR capacity is 20 children. This data does not reflect actual access and slots for children because center based child care/ preschools all under this category account for almost triple the space and well over 100,000 slots compared to family child care. Therefore, the true loss in capacity for child care in Maryland is much higher.

Our parents need quality day care to return to work. Our constituents are begging for this - **the roadmap we once pointed to for guidance has inexplicably excluded day care and we lack an adequate explanation.**

We are in agreement that the health and safety of our children remains our highest priority during this pandemic, we believe that the track record of child care centers reopening safely is a testament to that.

Please remove the capacity restrictions on child care centers and allow our children some semblance of normalcy to return to their child care homes.

Sincerely,
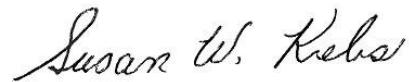
Senator Justin Ready   Delegate Susan Krebs

Delegate April Rose   Delegate Haven Shoemaker

CC: Dennis Schrader, Deputy Secretary for Operations, MDH
          Webster Ye, Director, Office of Governmental Affairs, MDH
          Tiffany Clark, Deputy Director, Government Relations, MSDE
          Keiffer Mitchell, Chief Legislative Officer, Office of the Governor
          Andrew Cassilly, Senior Advisor, Legislative Office of the Governor
          Steve Schuh, Executive Director, Opioid Operational Command Center, COVID-19 District 5
          Carroll County Commissioners