

May 13, 2020

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Thank you, Chairman..., and members of the committee. My name is _____ I am the owner/operator of _(Center Name)___ located in Ward ____ . I have been a professional child care provider for # years__ . I am submitting testimony on the District's [Healthy Futures/Child Care Subsidy program]. My center/home has the licensed capacity to serve # of children. COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on our community, children, and parents. The pandemic has disrupted the early learning community and taken away the normalcy as well as compassionate care that the children I serve have grown accustomed to experiencing. I am deeply concerned that my business is in jeopardy of closing forever, leaving the children and parents I serve without familiar; high quality; and convenient child care service.

DC already has a tremendous child care shortage; before the pandemic hit, there were only enough child care seats for one out of every three children under the age of 3 in DC. Now many providers like me are struggling to stay open and pay for their facilities and staff costs, there is a real risk of losing child care availability as a result of this pandemic. Given the growing threat of the child care closures, we are calling for immediate and bold government investments in this essential sector of the District's economy. To ensure a safe and inclusive recovery, DC Council needs to make child care a priority so parents can get back to work.

Without supplemental funding, child care providers - especially those who rely on private tuition payments – will continue struggling to pay rent and keep their employees. Small business grants specifically for child care are immediately needed to help cover rent, utilities, insurance, lost wages, and more. We should leverage emergency federal dollars to meet these needs.

Some key findings from a recent survey of 106 local care providers found that child care providers are not being reached by COVID-19 public financial supports. Only 2 out of 106 child care centers surveyed received a DC Small Business Microgrant. Only 25% of survey respondents were approved for a Payment Protection Program loan.

We need to increase DC's childcare subsidy program by \$40 million to improve the quality of care our littlest kids receive and to raise wages for early childhood educators. By reimbursing early childhood education programs for the full amount it costs to provide excellent care, DC can improve quality and access for all infants and toddlers. And with fair pay for child care workers, businesses can attract, retain, and elevate the high-quality workforce critical to giving DC children every opportunity to succeed.

I respectfully urge the Council to find the funding for DC's childcare subsidy program to ensure DC's littlest residents have every opportunity to succeed. Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I am happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,