

Written Testimony for Executive Order 122-20, COVID-19 Local Order

Christine R. Swanson-Fischer

November 4, 2020

To the Montgomery County Council,

I am please to submit my written testimony to the Council to oppose the provision of the order to continue capacity limits currently in effect for Montgomery Council Childcare Providers. My son has been with Sugar Plums Early Childhood Center in Rockville MD for over 3 years. Sugar Plums was established 30 years ago and recently was voted for the 5<sup>th</sup> consecutive year as the best childcare center in Rockville.

Ms. Deborah Ellick, the owner and all of the teachers at the center have adopted stringent protocols since Sugar Plums re-opened on June 15, 2020 after remaining closed for ~2.5 months. These protocols have been implemented not only to protect the health of the teachers and staff, but the children, their families and the community. These procedures include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Parents and visitors cannot enter building Sugar Plums is housed in
- Parents wear masks when dropping off and picking up child
- Separate locations of drop off and pick up for each classroom
- Staggered drop off and pick up times for children and teachers to mitigate risk
- One child will be dropped off at a time per classroom with 10-15 min between each child
- At pick up, parents wait in their car until it is time for pick up and utilize a digital application to communicate with teachers when they arrive for drop off and pickup
- All staff adhere to wearing masks, face shields as well as gloves (gloves as needed for lunch and snack time)
- Children > age 2 are also wearing masks
- Temperature is taken at drop off for each child utilizing a personal thermometer to provide reading to staff upon arrival.
- Children are also screened via a verbal questionnaire upon arrival such as:
  - If the child has any symptoms of COVID-19 and if there are any members of the household exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19
- Children with a fever (100.4 or greater) or other signs of illness, or if any household members of associated signs of illness are not admitted to Sugar Plums.
- Social distancing is enforced between children and teachers in the classroom when direct care is not being provided
- Parents provide and prepare all meals and snacks for their child to mitigate risk of preparing foods for consumption by staff
- The playground is thoroughly cleaned in between each classroom use by staff as are strollers

Deborah and the entire staff at Sugar Plums have been exceedingly transparent in communicating public health protocols and updating parents of procedures in case any children have symptoms of COVID in accordance with Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE).

Child classroom sizes remain small as they have been even prior to Covid-19. At the same time, Sugar Plums has demonstrated through its vigilance to adhering to public health guidance that they can operate safely at more than 50% capacity. I do not state that lightly. I am a Health Scientist Administrator (Program Officer) at NIH and my husband is an Emergency Medicine Physician. We personally know the seriousness of this virus that this community (and the nation) have faced over the last 8 months and would not offer our support of Sugar Plums (and certainly would not have placed our child back in daycare in June) if we did not feel confident in the public health precautions employed by Deborah and her staff.

Thank you for your time and please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any additional questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christine Swanson-Fischer".

Christine Swanson-Fischer, PhD  
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