

Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue, 4th Floor
Rockville, MD 20850

November 3, 2020

I am writing today to provide testimony on Executive Order 122-20 as it relates to limiting capacity of daycare centers to 50%.

You cannot support the recovery of our local economy without also supporting childcare. Parents need to work to pay for our rent, our mortgages, our utilities and other essential expenses, but we cannot do so without childcare. Plain and simple. If this order goes into effect, some daycares that have been safely caring for children will now have to turn them away. This in turn forces parents — usually mothers who, statistically, earn less than men — to reduce their working hours or drop out of the workforce all together. Hundreds of thousands of women in the US dropped out of the workforce in October alone.

I understand the council is likely acting out of concern due to the growing number of COVID-19 cases in the county. However, childcare centers have been operating throughout the pandemic and there has been no evidence that they are leading to increased cases or acting as super spreaders. If the council is committed to a science-based approach to regulations then this item shouldn't even be on the table as there is no data to support it.

On a personal note, my husband was laid off in March due to COVID and we immediately pulled our son out of his daycare. At that time there was really no other choice. Everyone was afraid and reliable information was hard to come by. We, along with millions of other parents, spent eight miserable months at home with one parent job searching and the other working virtually full-time. When my husband found new employment and we realized he would be working outside the home, we re-enrolled our son in daycare. It was gut-wrenching, but ultimately our mental health improved tenfold. We are both able to focus on work and our child is getting the social and intellectual engagement he needs.

Times have changed. We know so much more about COVID than we did before. Childcare providers are taking COVID seriously and are going above and beyond to provide a safe environment. They have been operating safely and effectively using the operating guidelines and guidance from the state health department that are already in effect. Let them continue to do so. If it's not broke, don't fix it. The parents of Montgomery County are begging you.

Respectfully
Erin Fernandez