

Written testimony for live hearing testimony to be given November 5, 2020:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of childcare providers, working parents and the youngest citizens of Montgomery County. It is a tremendous relief that a clarifying statement regarding Executive Order 122-20, COVID-19 Local Order was swiftly provided after efforts on behalf of many had to be called into action, on a day in which County licensing offices were closed and unable to provide us guidance. You have already received similar testimonies; I reiterate the following:

1) Scientific data confirms that child care centers are very low risk for COVID-19 transmission

and

2) child care is an essential and necessary service, especially during the pandemic

I urge you to look at the child care center models in the County that have been open throughout the pandemic and that reflect the scientific data that supports these low-risk environments. I am a director of a full-day, year-round childcare center that re-opened June 29th – there have been ZERO positive COVID-19 cases in our program in the 19 weeks we have been open. The Phase 2 protocols have allowed us to operate safely and we have no intention of relaxing our practices for the foreseeable future; health and safety is our highest priority. However, our program, as with most, is struggling financially to stay open because of capacity restrictions. We are committed to protecting the rights of children by providing safe and responsible child care but in order to do so, we are understaffed, overworked and our salaries have been reduced. If we cannot increase income through gradual enrollment over the coming months, our doors will close, as would those of the synagogue that we are an integral part of.

I am sure the intention in this Executive Order is not to disregard the importance of child care; however, lifting limitations on non-essential activities that have a much higher risk of spreading COVID-19 such as Escape Rooms, sends a contradictory message of concern about the health and safety of all County citizens.

There are many success stories to know about in the child care community that you are governing. We ask that you hear our voices and believe in us as you plan forward.

Melissa Williamson
Director, Early Childhood
Temple Emanuel
10101 Connecticut Avenue
Kensington, MD 20895
(301) 942-2000