



# ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON

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Archdiocesan Pastoral Center: 5001 Eastern Avenue, Hyattsville, MD 20782-3447  
Mailing Address: Post Office Box 29260, Washington, DC 20017-0260  
301-853-4500 TDD 301-853-5300

**Montgomery County Council Sitting as Board of Health Hearing on  
Regulation to adopt Executive Order 122-20 COVID-19 Local Order - Amending and Restating  
Order dated September 29, 2020**

**Testimony of Roshon V. Casey, M.A.  
Director of Early Childhood Programs, Archdiocese of Washington Catholic Schools  
November 5, 2020**

Like many others, the Archdiocese of Washington (ADW) has great concerns regarding the limitations on childcare facilities set out in section 6(b) of the proposed Executive Order 122-20.

The Archdiocese has significant experience in operating childcare facilities, and doing so in a safely during this health emergency. Overall, we have 26 licensed childcare programs, from early learning centers to before and after school. Our programs normally range in capacity from 30 to 200 children. Also, the health and safety of the children in our care, as well as their families and our staff is of the highest concern.

Continuing to keep the restricted group size of 15 staff and children would be a tremendous cut to our ability to provide the assistance that young people and their families need. It would thus cause harm to the children and to their parents' ability to maintain their own employment in addition to the detrimental impact on our employees and our ability to continue operating. Such restrictions could even possibly lead to staff lay-offs in facilities across the county as programs continue to be financially-strained and they can no longer afford to keep staff on board at the reduced capacity.

The Archdiocese fully appreciates the changing nature of the public health landscape and the recent increase in positive COVID cases and has taken this into account in our operations. Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Superintendent Dr. Karen B. Salmon has stated they have seen few positive cases in childcare. The Council and County staff should be further assured that our ADW programs have made considerable investments in our facilities to ensure they are safe for our students and staff. Our early childhood programs (and others in the community) adhere if not go above the MSDE Maryland Department of Health COVID guidelines related to cleaning, social distancing, mixing of class cohorts and face coverings. We have been involved with only two isolated cases (which were traced back to family members, not our facilities). We fully cooperated with local health officials in each instance, and have not seen outbreaks of multiple positive cases in our programs, likely because of the many precautions in place.

Under the current restrictions, and as proposed in Executive Order 122-20, fewer children will have access to quality, safe childcare, and will not receive the social and emotional interactions with peers that are so crucial at this point in their development. Meanwhile, as Dr. Salmon has warned, there are reports that illegal, unlicensed daycares are opening to meet increasing demand as people go back to work. There are, however, no background checks, no oversight for these unlicensed facilities and parents cannot be sure their children are in a safe environment.

The proposed Executive Order 122-20 does not reach the right balance between public health and the critical need for childcare. It does not prioritize the importance of childcare and early childhood programs in the community. The capacity limitations on safe, licensed childcare facilities also places providers in a tough place between being able to financially sustain their business, meet the needs of the families in the community, and adhere to the local regulations. We urge the Council to resubmit the proposed order back to the executive for appropriate revisions.