

To whom it may concern,

Children's Opportunity Alliance is an organization who has grown to be **an invaluable asset** to the early childhood education community in Montgomery County. At COA they collaborate with the ECE community to encourage cooperation between educators and community partners, while simultaneously boosting the funding to make those types of partnerships and more possible. They also gather and share information, support research, collect and leverage data from the ECE field, and drive advocacy for practices and policies that put children and families first.

My concern is that if you remove the first part of their work - the hands-on real support for the community part - the value of the second part of their work will be diminished as they will no longer be able to take action to support what they learn through community conversations and research.

As a former family home childcare provider myself, in my experience an organization that can only study and disseminate information in the ECE field is not as valuable of a direct benefit to the childcare providers or the families as one who is able to interact with the community, and fill in where gaps are found such as providing educator training, family support, and financial support towards the common agenda.

For example, COA supports leaders in the Montgomery childcare community to attend important meetings by providing the funds needed for those educators to pay their substitutes. This is small thing with a big impact. Without that funding the options would be either, 1. the leader closes their childcare to attend the meeting, leaving families without care so they are unable to work to support their own families, 2. The childcare leader does not attend the meeting where discussion directly impacts their work, or 3. The childcare provider pays the substitute themselves in order to attend the meeting, diminishing their own family's income for the benefit of the larger ECE community.

While it is true that the leaders at Montgomery County Child Care Support Services have also established a strong connection with the local childcare community, one that also provides training for educators and resources for families, our perspective is that **more is better**. Years of working in the ECE field in Montgomery County have taught us that we need more organizations, not less, to step up and fund these essential years to support the future of our community. With more organizations supporting childcare centers and family-based childcares to provide **high-quality care and education during the most critical years of human development our society will certainly benefit**.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Jamie Cowan
Story Tapestries

Early Childhood Program Director