

Dear Honorable Governor Cuomo

March 16, 2020

Child care centers need your strong leadership immediately. We need clear directions and protections during the COVID-19 pandemic. Schools are closed, and we are being told to avoid crowds to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus, but there is no such thing as social distance when we care for babies and toddlers. Our arms are open as we receive young children each day who depend upon us to hold, feed, and care for them so that their parents can work in hospitals and grocery stores and pharmacies. We are on the front lines.

Although we have been a blind spot in the conversation about COVID-19, we know we are not at the bottom of the hierarchy -we are at the center of the hub in our communities. We are the strong back bone of our society. Our care demonstrates our human connection and dependency upon one another during this dangerous health crisis. Childcare is an honorable profession and requires special skills and knowledge. In the best of times, it is demanding and challenging work, and during a crisis it requires us to strengthen and heighten our commitment and service to our youngest citizens.

We are at your service, and we ask to be acknowledged and supported in the following ways.

1. Close child care centers for **two or three days** to slow the spread of coronavirus, and to allow childcare centers to make an emergency plan and outline a procedures to open under emergency conditions next week. During this brief closure acknowledge the child care work force and speak of concern for the care of the caregivers, and the safety and health of babies, toddlers and young children.
2. Advise the Office of Children and Family Service to DENY waivers for child care centers to increase capacity and suspend supervision ratios. In other states such as Ohio, this has resulted in crowded child care centers and unsafe conditions. During this highly contagious virus spike, we must encourage child care centers to reduce capacity.
3. Because public schools are closed, encourage YMCAs, churches and public schools to operate emergency childcare centers for school aged children to avoid overcrowding centers that are designed for children ages 0-5.
4. Advise PARENTS across the state to make in-home arrangements if they ca, and to reserve emergency group child care for single parents and essential infrastructure employees such as nurses, doctors, paramedics, police officers, grocery store clerks and managers, pharmacists, etc.
5. Allow licensed child care providers in centers and homes that choose to be sites for emergency care to open for essential personnel for whom remote work is not an option, while offering guidance for emergency child care such as, but not limited to:
 - a. Operate below capacity. Avoid large groups of children – find ways to care for children in smaller groups and disperse as much as possible
 - b. Spend a good deal of time outdoors and plan for fresh air and sunshine
 - c. Do a daily health check and do not care for mildly sick children
 - d. Conduct adult led meals and minimize child to child contact during meals
 - e. Close two days per every 7 days for deep cleaning and disinfecting
 - f. Increase hand washing, cleaning and sanitation each day and at all transitions while children are in care
6. Emergency funding is needed to sustain our vital infrastructure of child care. Family home child care centers and small businesses have no margin for this financial fall out. We are working with various advocacy groups across the state to ask that child care centers can apply for emergency funding for income lost during closings required to stop the spread of COVID-19. Additionally, we must consider that those working in emergency child care centers are eligible for hazardous duty pay.

Respectfully,

Carol Murray, Bard College

Abigail Botstein Nursery School

Julie A. Riess, Vassar College

Wimpfheimer Nursery School & Infant Toddler Center