



Dear Elected Official,

On behalf of our fellow community-based organizations and nonprofits: United Way is reaching out to our elected officials for clarity and allyship, as Northwest Ohio faces a devastating outcome due to COVID-19: **The loss of high-quality childcare.**

Right now, numerous childcare providers in the community are making the tough decision to either reopen or evaluate how long they can indeed stay open during this pandemic. Financial losses due to months-long closures, smaller class sizes, and new operation and cleaning protocols to keep staff and children safe is proving to be a great challenge.

[Groundwork Ohio](#), the state's leading policy and advocacy organization for children says that, "In Ohio, 556,558 children under age six have all available parents in the labor force." Parents of nearly 600,000 kids are working, valuable and essential contributors to our local economies and communities. Additionally, Groundwork Ohio estimates that we "...stand to lose 45% of our state's childcare supply, which translates to nearly 100,000 slots across the state" because of the ongoing pandemic. A loss of available childcare openings means that an unprecedented number of kids, right here in Ohio, will automatically be out of care. **This includes children in your district.**

Recently, Governor DeWine announced that childcare providers may resume full classroom capacity on August 9, if they so choose. Those who wish to remain at "pandemic ratios" (one teacher for every six children) could be applicable for subsidies to off-set mounting costs.

Providers have noted various concerns around this process moving forward, which is why we are reaching out to our State Officials in hopes to further understand these processes. Those concerns are as follows...

1. **It is unclear to providers** if children who receive funds from Job & Family Services (publicly funded childcare, "PFCC") will receive reimbursements at summer or school-day rates. Summer rates are reimbursed at higher dollar amounts, given that providers offer care to children for the entire day. It is assumed that hourly care is less during the school year, as children are *physically* in school during the day, therefore, school year reimbursement rates are much lower. As we know, this is not the case for numerous school districts in Northwest Ohio. If more children need care during the school day, but providers receive the standard, lesser school day reimbursement rates, (currently, rules state they cannot be reimbursed **at all** to provide care during "school day hours") – they will either have to limit the number of enrolled children or ask parents, who are working and financially struggling, to pay standard care rates to recover from those low reimbursements or zero reimbursement. This is unobtainable and unaffordable for families in our region.

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2. **It is unclear to providers** what the Governor's stated "subsidy rates" are for centers that remain at pandemic ratios. As of today, what has been eluded is that rates will be announced later in August, while the option to "go full capacity" will begin on August 9, 2020. These conflicting timelines prove to be incredibly difficult to providers, who need to plan and forecast their classroom ratios as a way to ensure their staff, children and parents remain safe during these uncertain times.
3. **It is unclear and incredibly concerning to providers** on how the families they serve each day can afford care as they head back into the workplace. With every school district charting their own back-to-school strategy, this requires professional parents to plan for virtual academic days, hybrid academic days or in-person academic days. We know that, currently, parents are budgeting for before and / or after-school care, but, if their child requires all-day-care as their classrooms operate on a completely virtual-basis, providers will have to charge full-day-rates. That would include pricing for nutritional supports like breakfast and lunch. If these new costs exceed a family's current childcare budget, **what will happen to our community's children?** Will they stay at home, completely alone? Rely on the supervision of a babysitter, who isn't providing them with robust, educational care? Parents are already financially suffering enough because of the pandemic, and the cost of childcare may be totally out-of-reach for kids who need care the most.
4. **It is unclear to providers** how they will find, and be able to pay, staff for all-day support...more-so for support of the school age population. Many providers rely on University or College students who are studying this area of expertise, but their own academic functioning's are also uncertain. This is on top of the **persisting year-to-year struggle** to find early childhood education staff, who are grossly underpaid and undervalued in our economic structures.

Over the last month, at the federal level, United Way and community advocates have been engaging in ongoing advocacy efforts: Phone calls, video calls, etc. with our federally elected Senators and Congressional Representatives. We have urged them to support the **Child Care Is Essential Act**, proposed in both the U.S. House and Senate, (recently passed in the House). This legislation, if enacted, would contain \$50 billion to be used to help childcare providers continue offering affordable, high-quality care, while also implementing important new health and safety measures.

That being said, our Federal Government systems can only move so quickly and can only offer so much support. Just this month, some providers did / are receiving dollars from the Cares Act, which was passed by Congress in March. Providers are certainly grateful for the few thousand dollars leveraged, and assistance via loans from the Small Business Administration, but it's not enough to withstand this economic storm.

**Community stakeholders ask our State Officials to please review this letter fully and help our providers in any capacity that they can.** We cannot overlook childcare as a critical component of sustaining Northwest Ohio's workforce and overall financial health. For our region and state to "return to work" – we must provide the structures needed for professional parents to do just that. **More importantly, we owe this to our children who deserve safe, high-quality, educational care.**

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Please see the community signees on the following page, looking to your office for action and answers...

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United Way of Greater Toledo



Brad Toft, President and CEO  
YMCA of Greater Toledo



Lisa McDuffie, MSSA, LISW-S, President and CEO  
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Christina Rodriguez, Executive Director  
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Wendy R. Gramza, CCE, President and CEO  
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