

October 17, 2019

Secretary Ross Hunter
Washington State Department
of Children, Youth, and Families
1110 Jefferson St SE
Olympia, WA 98501

Dear Secretary Hunter,

Thank you for your leadership in improving services for children and youth across the age continuum. One important and often overlooked support for children and families is school-age child care. Over 30% of children on child care subsidy are school-age (5-12) and over half of those are in School-Age Only Licensed Child Care (SACC) programs (WAC 110-305).

One of the greatest challenges facing providers and families in the school-age child care field are the staff educational requirements in regulation. These are currently limiting providers' ability to serve children, provide high-quality service, and in some cases, stay open.

Providers and other partners were thrilled with the opportunity to provide recommendations on improving and simplifying the SACC regulations. The report was submitted to DCYF on September 30, 2019. There are many recommendations and one of the most crucial and immediate changes to be addressed are the education requirements for various staffing positions. Most of the recommended changes mirror much of what was done with the early learning-focused regulatory changes. We believe the changes align to the needs of school-age kids, the transitional nature of school-age child care (part-time during the school year and full-time in the summer), as well taking into account the wages providers are able to pay.

The Washington Expanded Learning Opportunities Network and the 26 number of signed organizations with the assigned providers, representing over 520 sites, are requesting an expedited and/or emergency rule making process to take the staffing recommendations from the report and make changes to regulations as quickly as possible. Hiring staff has been very challenging across the state. Statewide, the YMCAs have a wait list of over 500 kids due to the lack of candidates that meet the current regulatory requirements for education. Kids Co., a King County nonprofit child care organization has over 100 kids on a wait list due to staffing shortages. Many senior staff at larger organizations are having to step in to help cover ratios for those children already in program let alone for increasing staffing capacity for those on the wait list. Additionally, for many programs in school buildings, superintendents and principals are becoming increasingly frustrated that providers are not able to serve the number of children that were agreed upon because of hiring limitations.

Given the crisis that is unfolding for school-age kids and their families as well as strain on providers, we again respectfully request an emergency rule making process to implement the recommended changes to educational requirements for provider staffing types. If you have any questions or ideas about this issue, please contact David Beard at School's Out Washington at dbeard@schoolsoutwashington.org. We look forward to continuing to provide a safe and supportive environment that sustains and grows the gains from early learning and the school day.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to our field's continued partnership with DCYF.

Signed Organizations:

Associated Recreation Council in partnership with Seattle Parks and Recreation (26 sites)

AYD Geek

Blazing Trails Child Care

Boys & Girls Clubs of Benton and Franklin Counties (17 sites)

Boys & Girls Clubs of King County (20 sites)

Champions Before- and After-School

Chateau Jouval Child Care

The Eastside Montessori School

Educational Service District 112 (25 sites)

Empowering Youth and Families Outreach

Evergreen Children's Association

Green Lake School Age Child Care Program

Kids Club After School Program

Kids Co. (14 sites)

Latona School Associates

Launch (7 sites)

Learning Avenues Child Care Centers

Luv-N-Care Child Care

The Multicultural Child and Family Hope Center

New Life Community Development Corporation (CDC)

Ravenna Eckstein at Thornton Creek/Kids Time

Right At School (121 sites)

School's Out Childcare, Inc

School's Out Washington

Spokane Public Schools, Express Program (16 sites)

Washington State Alliance of YMCAs (259 sites)

CC:

Frank Ordway, DCYF, Director of Government Affairs and Community Engagement

Luba Bezborodnikova, DCYF, Assistant Secretary of Licensing

Judy Bunkelman, DCYF, Child Care Licensing Administrator