



January 6, 2020

Director Stephanie McCloud
Ohio Department of Health
246 N. High Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Re: Prioritizing Child Care Workforce for the COVID-19 Vaccine

Dear Director McCloud:

Thank you for your leadership during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. We appreciate the challenges you continue to face each day and your dedication to keep Ohioans safe and healthy. We write to you today to urge you to prioritize early childhood educators in child care settings for vaccine distribution alongside K-12 educators.

Many of Ohio's child care programs have remained open throughout the entire pandemic. During the early weeks as the state's economy shut down, more than 2,000 programs chose to serve children of essential workers under a temporary pandemic licensure, without which tens of thousands of healthcare professionals, grocery clerks, public safety officials, and others would not have been able to work. Both center-based and family child care programs continue to provide essential support to workers on the front line, particularly those with children under age 5. Simply put, essential workers with young children cannot work without early childhood educators in child care programs remaining healthy and keeping their classrooms open.

Child care programs also fill a significant gap for families with school-aged children when school is virtual *and* in person. As schools have relied on virtual learning over the past ten months, child care programs have become the home-base for students whose parents continue to work, providing educational, developmental, and social-emotional support. Even when schools are in-person, many children utilize before- and after-school programs, often in child care settings. Without the support of child care programs, a full return to in-person schooling will not work for working families.

As the essential workforce behind Ohio's workforce, we are asking that early childhood educators in child care settings receive the same priority for the COVID-19 vaccine as K-12 educators. Once again, thank you for your leadership during these difficult times and for your consideration regarding this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Allison Russo".

Allison Russo
Co-Chair, Ohio Children's Caucus
State Representative
Ohio House District 24

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephanie Kunze".

Stephanie Kunze
Co-Chair, Ohio Children's Caucus
State Senator
Ohio Senate District 16