

Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D.
State Superintendent of Schools

March 16, 2020

Dear Early Childhood Community:

We want to express our deepest gratitude and appreciation for each of you as leaders and partners as we face this historic national emergency. Many of you, especially child care teachers, directors, and providers, are acting as first responders in your communities. You are doing what you have always done: protect our most vulnerable children and families.

We know some of you have chosen to close for the two weeks that schools are closed. Others are keeping the lights on to meet the needs of parents and caregivers who can't be at home with their children during the day. Still others have stepped up to either re-open for our hospital and emergency personnel or expand the number of children they can serve under Governor Hogan's Executive Order and the temporary relaxing of licensing regulations. In all cases, we understand and fully support your decision. We know you are doing it because you believe it is the best way to address the crisis.

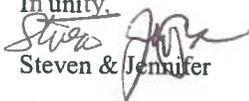
We know that if you are open this next two weeks, or when you reopen later, you will do all you can to ensure a safe, clean environment for your children and staff. You will be doing this while addressing your own personal feelings: fear for the health of yourself and your family; anger that we are all not better prepared to face this crisis; sadness for those who are suffering. We also know that you are professionals and form the foundation of our system. We also know you don't always have the luxury to stop working to sustain your own families.

Each member of the Division of Early Childhood team is keenly aware of the trusted and vital role you each serve in your respective communities. Families, children and community leaders look to you for guidance and to be reassured in this time of uncertainty. The COVID-19 pandemic is challenging our everyday lives and our systems. It takes a toll on us, both physically and mentally. And there are real economic impacts to our communities and households. Our daily routines of going to early childhood programs, school, and work have been disrupted. Even just connecting with friends and neighbors has become challenging as we strive for absolute social distancing. In these times, the strength of your leadership is essential.

At the Division of Early Childhood, we are here for you. We know leaders such as yourself need a strong support network to be effective. In this newsletter and on our website, you will find contact numbers/e-mails and resources we hope will be helpful. Please reach out to us so we can help. We may not have the immediate answer, but we will get it for you. If you are a child care provider, be in contact with your licensing specialist. Let them know if you need anything. Let them know if you have space to take additional children, especially the children of hospital and emergency personnel. If needed, we will compensate you for providing child care for these first responders.

We know that we will all get through this if we work together keep focused on our north star: keep everyone safe.

In unity,



Steven & Jennifer

DEC Website for updated information

<https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/>

Governor Hogan's Executive Order

<https://governor.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Day-Care-Order.pdf>

MSDE Press Release

<https://news.maryland.gov/msde/governor-hogan-enacts-emergency-order-to-expand-access-to-child-care-during-covid-19-state-of-emergency-2/>