

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 13, 2020

The Honorable Charlie Baker
Governor
Commonwealth of Massachusetts
State House, Room 360
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Governor Baker,

We write today to express our concern regarding the lack of transparency as it pertains to COVID-19 data in child care settings. We recognize the challenging tightrope you and your administration must walk during these uncertain times and the imperative of protecting the privacy of personal information. However, we believe that access to COVID-19 data from child care providers would help Massachusetts families make informed decisions regarding sending their children back to school in the coming weeks.

Based on your administration's reports, 64 coronavirus cases have been reported at 47 emergency child care programs, but gaps remain in the data regarding the impact of coronavirus cases on emergency child care centers. For example, it is not clear how many of those cases involved children and how many involved parents, to what extent any one child care center experienced community spread, or the length of time a provider was forced to close due to COVID-19. We believe this type of data is critical for families to make informed decisions and that it can be shared without revealing the identities of the patients or the impacted child care providers.

According to a recent review by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Children's Hospital Association, at least 97,000 children tested positive for coronavirus in the last two weeks of July.^[1] While there is still much we do not understand about how the virus impacts children, this uptick in cases is disturbing, and we were pleased to see the announcement that your administration would be releasing enhanced community level data on the spread of COVID-19 as transparent data sharing can be a powerful tool to protect the health and safety of families in Massachusetts.^[2] The Commonwealth is in a unique position to provide the country with a better understanding of how COVID is handled in a school-like setting because 550 emergency child care centers remained open and were carefully monitored in Massachusetts throughout the pandemic. The experience of these facilities over the last few months could be an important benchmark for considering how best to open schools and other child care settings. It's also clear that data is the critical tool for parents to make the best decisions for their families.

^[1] <https://downloads.aap.org/AAP/PDF/AAP%20and%20CHA%20-%20Children%20and%20COVID-19%20State%20Data%20Report%207.30.20%20FINAL.pdf>

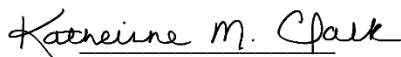
^[2] <https://www.mass.gov/news/baker-polito-administration-releases-enhanced-community-level-data-on-spread-of-covid-19>

Therefore, we would appreciate your consideration of the following questions and respectfully ask for your written response as soon as possible.

- In addition to any privacy concerns, what other reasons do you have for not publicly disclosing available data on how coronavirus cases have impacted emergency child care centers?
 - Please share the number of emergency child care providers across the Commonwealth that were forced to close, either permanently or on a temporary basis as the result of coronavirus cases, as well as the length of time these providers were closed.
 - Please share the number of emergency child care providers who experienced more than one coronavirus case and the number of incidences of community spread between staff and children.
 - Please share any data you might have on successful strategies providers deployed to detect and respond to potential or confirmed COVID-19 cases.
- On July 24, H. 4808, the Massachusetts FY20 supplemental budget, was signed into law. Section 45 of this law included language specifying that the Department of Public Health would continue to collect and report data as it pertains to child care programs.^[3] Please provide an update on your progress toward implementing this Section and an explanation of how the Department of Public Health will collaborate with the Department of Early Education and Care and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to aggregate and display the relevant data to empower parents and educators.
- Please describe any additional support we can provide at the Federal level to provide you with the resources required to ensure safe, transparent data collection and sharing.

Sharing data in a transparent manner continues to be of the utmost importance and is one of the few actions that can be taken to immediately improve the ability of Massachusetts families to make informed decisions about their children’s safety. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Katherine Clark
Member of Congress

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

Joseph P. Kennedy, III
Member of Congress

Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress

Lori Trahan
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James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

Richard E. Neal
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William R. Keating
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Stephen F. Lynch
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Seth Moulton
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^[3] <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/191/h4808>

CC:

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