



# City of Austin

P.O. Box 1088, Austin, TX 78767-1088

April 1, 2020

Greg Abbott  
Office of the Governor of Texas  
P.O. Box 12428  
Austin, Texas 78711-2428

Dear Governor Abbott,

The City of Austin thanks you for creating a new protected class for frontline workers who are combating the COVID-19 pandemic to qualify for subsidized child care and that this class includes grocery workers. We also applaud you for granting the waivers sought by the Texas Workforce Commission that provides them with the flexibility they need to ensure adequate access to child care services, especially to our frontline workers. We believe these actions provide a solid foundation in ensuring that our frontline workers have access to child care, and we encourage you to take some additional steps to ensure our child care providers have the support they need to provide this much-needed service.

With the closure of schools, the cost of providing these services and staffing will now fall on child care providers. We know that even under normal circumstances, existing subsidy reimbursement rates typically fall short of covering the cost of quality care. Under today's circumstances that are driven by COVID-19, those subsidy reimbursement rates will now be insufficient to compensate staff and providers for meeting the required standards. Therefore, we urge you to ensure funding is sufficient so that all frontline workers can access quality child care at no cost to the providers.

We know you share our interest in supporting our Texas businesses through this difficult time. Child care centers are a crucial part of our business climate. As child care centers are forced to close for public health purposes, providers are losing private tuition resources, and educators are losing their jobs. We respectfully request that the State provide funding supports or create loan programs targeted for child care providers so that they can pay their staff and cover their fixed costs.

Child care educators are at risk of exposure to COVID-19 but often have poor or no health insurance. In order to ensure that child care workers are willing and able to provide this much needed service – especially for our frontline workers – they must know that they will have the means to receive medical care and cover their medical costs at a time in which they are struggling with reduced earnings. Therefore, we respectfully request that you accept federal funds to offer insurance to low-wage workers and work with federal partners to open a special enrollment period for individuals to purchase commercial health insurance on HealthCare.gov.

We believe you would agree that childcare is key to the families of individuals providing essential services and will enable them to have the peace of mind they need to continue working. In turn, child care providers and staff need reliable employment and supports to provide child care service. Your recent actions regarding child care provide a solid foundation in providing this much-needed support, and we appreciate these. We believe the recommendations included in this letter would further ensure that Texas child care providers are adequately supported and prepared to provide the child care services necessary so that frontline workers can continue to combat this pandemic.

We thank you in advance for your consideration of and prompt attention to this matter and look forward to continuing to work together to provide critical support for the people of Austin, Travis County, and Texas.

Sincerely,



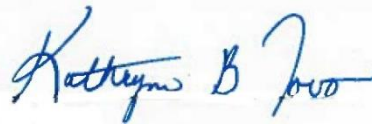
Steve Adler  
Mayor, City of Austin



Delia Garza  
Mayor Pro Tem, City of Austin



Alison Alter  
Council Member, City of Austin



Kathy Tovo  
Council Member, City of Austin



Natasha Harper-Madison  
Council Member, City of Austin

CC: Reagan Miller, Director, Texas Workforce Commission, Child Care & Early Learning Division