

Strategies for Children

November 30, 2020

The Honorable Charlie Baker
Governor
The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
State House, Room 360
Boston, MA 01233

At a press conference on November 18, you announced a rapid testing program for public school districts, charter schools and other educational settings. Phase 1 of this program will prioritize schools providing in-person instruction. Early education and care and out-of-school time providers have been providing in-person instruction since June – emergency programs since March, and yet, they are not included in this initial phase.

We have been advocating for improved testing measures for programs licensed by the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) for months in an effort to mitigate virus spread for children, families and staff. However, requests from child care providers have gone largely unanswered. **We ask for equity and to be recognized and supported as essential infrastructure.**

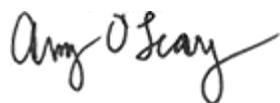
The staff working in EEC-licensed programs need access to rapid testing and results in order for programs to remain sustainable and open. Early education and care providers face overwhelming staffing challenges every day due to insufficient testing protocols. The inconsistency in test result time is devastating to programs that are struggling to remain open and families who need care to return to work.

We ask that future phases of this program be extended to include early education and care providers who are able to meet the 6 criteria outlined by the Department of Public Health. Additionally, we ask that any school age children in EEC licensed settings have access to testing in their school district.

Most importantly, we ask that the Governor's administration work with the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) to develop a comprehensive testing protocol for EEC licensed programs that addresses the needs of the field so that child care providers may remain open and continue to serve the children and families of Massachusetts.

Looking to the future, **we ask that early education and care providers and educators are prioritized as essential workers in any future vaccine distribution.** At the very least we ask for parity, so that the employees who are responsible for the care and education of the Commonwealth's children are viewed as equal partners.

Thank you.



Amy O'Leary, Early Education for all Campaign Director
Strategies for Children

Cc: Education Secretary Jim Peyser
Health and Human Services Secretary Marylou Sudders
Commissioner Sam Aigner-Treworgy
Senate President Karen Spilka
Speaker of the House Robert DeLeo
Chairman Jason Lewis, Joint Committee on Education
Chairwoman Alice Peisch, Joint Committee on Education