

Lopez, Maria [COB]

From: Scott Ayres <scott@childcareprovidersoc.com>
Sent: Monday, March 08, 2021 3:51 PM
To: COB_Response
Subject: Comments for upcoming Board meetings

Attention: This email originated from outside the County of Orange. Use caution when opening attachments or links.

I'd like to see the Orange County Health Care Agency provide support on expanding the cohort guidelines for Preschools as the county moves into safer tiers and as the providers become vaccinated. Changes need to be made at CDPH, but it would be nice to have support from OCHCA on this matter.

Background: The California Department of Public Health provided cohort guidelines on Sept 4th stipulating children groups should be limited to only 14 children. Most preschool classrooms were designed for 24 children, so this reduces capacity by 40%

Reasons: There are several reasons for an expansion of these guidelines should be in place

- **More jobs for women.** Preschools are typically limiting enrollment to 12 in a classroom since the student teacher ratio is 12:1. It would cost \$4000/month to add labor to increase more than 12, but only \$2000/month in revenue for 2 more students. Increasing cohorts to 20+ will add more staff, and most preschool staff are women.
- **This is the backbone for the economy.** As more businesses open and expand, the needs for childcare will increase. We are the work that gets other work done
- **The cohort number is not based on science.** The arbitrary number of 14 is not based on science and 35 states have no reduction. 11 states have reduced group sizes, but are higher than CA
- **We are safe.** Many preschools have been open for 8 months+ and have kept children and families safe. The COVID infection rate in a CA preschool is less than 1% compared to the general population of almost 10% (CDSS data)
- **Vaccination of teachers will drop cases even more.** A majority of the cases in preschools are from staff. If staff is vaccinated, then the rate will drop even further
- **We need economic stability.** We've been open this whole time providing care at a financial loss. Most preschools operate on razor thin margins even before the pandemic. Many have permanently closed their doors resulting in a loss of over 3,000 slot for children.

Please help us gain support to pressure California Department of Public Health to make the changes to cohort sizes. Other businesses are provided guidelines to expand as the county moves into safer tier. Why can't childcare be afforded the same privileges?

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