**Instructions:** We encourage you to use this letter as a starting place to let your member of the Prince George’s County Council know what’s happening with child care in your neighborhood. Please contact the Council from your family child care program or your child care center; whether you’ve been open as an EPCC program or closed, or whether you’re re-opening now or still closed. Together we can help the Council understand the urgency of supporting child care. The letter below includes some suggested areas to add your own experience. Please add in your stories and delete any parts of the template you do not use (including deleting these instructions). Thank you for taking action!

Dear Council Member (insert name):

Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, Prince George’s County was home to **747 family child care programs and 377 centers.** I am writing to you today on behalf of one of those programs: (insert name of the program and location/city in the county).

When Governor Hogan ordered the closure of child care centers and family child care homes due to COVID-19, the Maryland State Department of Education created an application process for child care programs to be available to serve essential workers. **Our 1,124 licensed child care programs shrank to 435 programs for essential workers only.**

Child care in Prince George County was in crisis prior to the COVID-19 presenting new challenges. Regulated child care, both family child care and center-based programs, had been on a steady decline in our county since 2015. There is no time to lose. Statewide, 51% of child care providers reported extended closure will force them to close permanently, according to a survey by Maryland Family Network. We cannot afford such a loss in Prince George’s County.

I stayed open because… Here’s what that has been like…

Or

I closed because… I re-opened on (date) and here’s what that has been like… Or, I have not re-opened yet because…

Here are some examples that you could use to tell your own story:

* Child care programs that remained open to serve the families of essential personnel faced unique challenges. Include some of your own unique challenges, such as operating with a loss of income, concerns about payroll, rent/mortgages, and benefits, and working in close contact/risk of exposure to COVID-19. EPCC programs faced payment delays and under-enrollment, which were challenging.
* Child care programs that closed due to safety concerns or the inability to sustain operations on the limited income from reduced enrollment still had fixed costs of wages and rent. When asked what they would need to reopen, Resource Center survey respondents shared a need for additional funding, thermometers, review of policy and guidance for properly reopening, cleaning supplies and PPE. Statewide, among closed programs, 71% said they would need financial support to re-open or sustain the business; 29% need grants for re-opening costs.(Include examples of how you would put such funding to use at your program.)

As our community transitions to re-opening businesses and services requiring working families to access child care, returning to child care will happen on a variety of timelines. With summer here, parents of school age children will also have needs for child care arrangements that are safe, affordable and reliable. Huge questions remain as the county makes plans for back-to-school this fall as well.

**Prince George’s County leaders can:**

* Invest county funds to the local child care workforce and child care programs
* Prioritize COVID relief funds for child care as infrastructure in the county
* Prioritize supplies and PPE for child care centers and family child care homes
* Advocate to the Governor and General Assembly for investments in child care

**I also encourage you to explore these resources:**

* The numbers of family child care and center programs in our neighborhood prior to the COVID crisis, on pages 6 and 7 of this report from Maryland Family Network: <https://www.marylandfamilynetwork.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/PrinceGeorges.pdf>
* In 2016, according to Maryland Family Network, employee absence and turnover due to child care issues cost Maryland employers $2.4 billion and Maryland’s economy lost $117 million in tax revenue due to missed work because of child care issues: <https://www.marylandfamilynetwork.org/sites/default/files/2020-06/MarylandFamilyNetwork_Countingourlosses_FullReport_Hyperlinked_Singles%20%281%29.pdf>
* In 2019, according to Committee for Economic Development, child care businesses across the state generated $1.02 billion in revenue and had an economic impact of $2.05 billion: <https://www.ced.org/assets/reports/childcareimpact/fact_sheets/revised/Maryland%20Fact%20Sheet%201312019.pdf>)

Thank you for all that you have done to ensure Prince George County’s families and children are safe and healthy in response to the COVID-19 crisis. Each day brings a new challenge and we are grateful for your leadership.

Please contact me if you have any questions or would like to talk about ideas for supporting child care in Prince George’s County.

Sincerely,

Be sure to include your name, program name, and contact information.