

February 8, 2018

Zoning Commission

441 4th Street, NW

Suite 200S

Washington, DC 20001

Re: Supports for Zoning Commission Case No. 17-20

Dear Members of the Commission:

I am writing in support of the proposed text amendment known as Zoning Commission Case No. 17-20. I am a parent of an 18-month old toddler in DC and have had firsthand experience with the difficulty of finding convenient, quality, and affordable childcare.

I paid to be on multiple waiting lists (and never received any follow up that a spot had opened up on any of them) during my pregnancy. Just two weeks after my son was born, one of the centers that I was on the waiting list for sent an email out saying that they were planning on opening a center in three months on H St. NE. The center was named Kiddie University. I went ahead and reserved a spot and paid a significant deposit. I felt so lucky to have found a spot a brand-new center that would open right before I was slated to get off maternity leave.

Unfortunately, this did not happen. We were told that the center would open in December rather than October, so I decided to work from home for my first three weeks back. December came, and we were told that the center would open until March. I had to have my parents come from almost 1,000 miles out of state to help me with child care and rent a temporary unit to help fill in the gap for six weeks. I also hired part time nannies to fill in the gaps (part time nannies are extremely hard to find as most want full time positions). To no one's surprise, the center did not open in March either. It was late summer before the center opened and my son was a year old at that point.

The reason for the delays? Zoning and permitting problems that were unforeseen, unexpected, and illogical. This halted construction on the center for months and months. It was ridiculous and caused stress and financial burden.

We recently enrolled my son in a day care near our new house in Brookland called Petit Scholars as he was beginning to experience developmental delays regarding language and other social activities. Part of this is because the nanny share and grandparents have caused him to have less exposure to structured, social activities than he needs.

I was shocked and saddened to learn that other families at the center had also experienced issues with delayed openings due to zoning. Just like with Kiddie University on H St., families at Petit Scholars were forced to incur additional costs, unneeded stress, and disruptions to work due to zoning restrictions, changing of requirements with little reasoning or warning, and uncertainty and unpredictability from the board. These issues not only have a negative impact on families and working parents, but they have a ripple effect to local businesses and workplaces that employ the affected parents.

As a working mother, I appreciate the focus from the city on making paid maternity leave a universal right. A much bigger focus should be paid to making quality child care accessible and affordable. Unnecessary regulations, unpredictability, and policies that only add to the cost of child care are making the problem worse. If DC is to support its children, you must address this.

I, therefore, urge the Commission to expeditiously approve the proposed corrections, reinstate the permitted use for childcare centers, and look to other policies that will help expand the use of accessible, affordable, quality child care.

Sincerely,

Katie Velliky
2918 12th St. NE
Washington, DC 20017