

Testimony of Raúl Echevarría Co-founder and President of CommuniKids Preschool regarding proposed amendments to Subtitles B, U, and K of Title 11 DCMR. Thursday, February 8, 2018 @ 6:30 p.m. Jerrily R. Kress Memorial Hearing Room 441 Fourth St., NW Suite 220-S Washington, DC 20001

Good Evening, my name is Raúl Echevarría Co-founder and President of CommuniKids Preschool located at 4719 Wisconsin Avenue, NW. I am here to testify in favor of the amendments to Subtitles B, U, and K of Title 11 DCMR that would:

- expand daytime care use as a matter of right instead of special exception
- remove pre-established caps on number of children at child development facilities, and;
- eliminate the requirement for the location of play areas.

CommuniKids was recently selected by the D.C. Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) to become a provider of free pre-kindergarten to 3 and 4 year-old children in the District of Columbia. We are proud of our selection into a program that provides district families with affordable access to high quality early childhood education (ECE), an initiative that is an important first step to help bring the cost of ECE under control. The high cost of ECE is a major national problem and district families are under particular pressure. As of 2016 D.C. families spent on average \$22,658 per year on ECE services - approximately 35% of median household income - on par with what many pay for housing. This cost puts high quality preschool out of reach of most city families. The dearth of affordable ECE options has been a drag on the district's economy for decades. As young families leave the city to find less expensive higher quality educational options for their children the city's tax base is eroded and the overall competitiveness of the capital is adversely impacted. For this and other reasons, it is imperative that we do all we can to reduce the cost of ECE in our city.

In order to lower the cost of ECE, it is important to understand the reasons why it is so expensive to educate a young child in the district. While there are many factors that can affect the cost of the service, it mainly boils down to supply and demand. In D.C. there are simply not enough ECE seats to go around and this scarcity leads to sky high prices. A study by the D.C. Appleseed Center for Law and Justice from 2015 found that there were 22,000 kids under three in the city, but only 7,600 seats at licensed child development centers. Lack of access to affordable space in the expensive and crowded District of Columbia market is one of the main barriers to expansion for Child Development Centers. We believe that zoning regulations, as they currently stand, unduly burden the child development industry by requiring child development facilities in the impacted zones to go through the cumbersome, lengthy and expensive process at the BZA. Make no mistake - these delays and expenses have a significant impact on the bottom line of numerous child development providers across the city and that will limit the amount of investment providers make in increasing capacity at their facilities. Without providers making expansion investments the cost of ECE in our city will continue to rise and families will continue to have trouble finding high quality early childhood education for their children.

Let's make sure that zoning regulations mesh with district policies that make providing access to finding high quality care a priority. Indeed, just last week D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser announced a \$9 million initiative to help add 1,000 infants and toddler seats at DC child development facilities by 2020. Let's make sure that zoning regulations are in line with this most important goal. Let's 1) amend current regulations to remove requirement for location of play areas in (RF) Zones; 2) allow child development centers as a matter of right with no limitations in (RA),(MU), and (WR) Zones. Thanks for your time.