

September --, 2017

The Honorable Terence R. McAuliffe
Governor of Virginia
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, VA 23218

Dear Governor McAuliffe:

On behalf of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, I am writing to you today about a matter of great importance to our residents – child care subsidies for working families with low to moderate incomes.

As you may know, in Fairfax County the Child Care Assistance and Referral (CCAR) program provides financial assistance for child care to income-eligible families who are working or in training. This critical program for working families currently provides such subsidies for approximately 4,400 children each month. Funding for the program is a combination of federal, state, and local dollars, with participating families paying for child care based on a sliding scale. The median income of families in this program is approximately \$29,000.

In June 2017, the Virginia Board of Social Services approved new regulations governing child care programs participating in the state child care subsidy program, which are now awaiting your review. One of the changes being considered – a requirement that all providers have the ability to speak, read, and write in English – raises particular concerns for Fairfax County. According to the proposed regulations, English proficiency will be verified during annual state health and safety inspections. It is important to note that this is not a federal requirement, as federal regulations encourage states to support providers who are English language learners, and to respect and support children's home language and culture. Parents often choose providers who speak their home language, which supports continuity between the child's home and child care setting.

This proposed state requirement would create a particular problem in Fairfax County, which is one of only three localities in the Commonwealth that locally permit small home-based child care facilities (serving four children or less), many of which participate in the state child care subsidy program. The County does not require providers in small home child care facilities to speak fluent English; rather, the County works with all providers, including those who are English language learners. Systems are in place to support providers, including offering technical assistance in multiple languages so that they may be able to comply with all applicable local, state, and federal regulations. Should this regulation be approved, some locally permitted family child care providers could lose their ability to serve children who receive state child care subsidies, potentially reducing the supply of affordable child care for working families in Fairfax County.

It is our hope that the state will not adopt the regulation related to the English language requirement. If, however, this regulation is adopted, we request that Fairfax County be given a

waiver, as our small home-based child care facilities are permitted and inspected locally (including two home health and safety inspections and one fire inspection annually), unlike those in most parts of the Commonwealth where such facilities are not locally regulated. As you know, child care assistance for families with low to moderate incomes is essential, allowing parents to work and maintain self-sufficiency, enhancing economic growth, and ensuring school readiness and safety for our youngest Virginians.

We appreciate your commitment to these issues, and look forward to working with you in the weeks and months ahead. Thank you for your time and assistance with these critical matters.

Sincerely,

Sharon Bulova
Chairman, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

cc: Members, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
Members, Fairfax County Delegation to the General Assembly
The Honorable William A. Hazel, Jr., Secretary of Health and Human Resources
Kirk W. Kincannon, Acting County Executive
Patricia D. Harrison, Deputy County Executive
Claudia H. Arko, Legislative Director