



January 6, 2017

Hon. Jack Ciattarelli
Ciattarelli for Governor
PO Box 8048
Somerville, NJ 08876

Dear Assemblyman Ciattarelli:

On behalf of the New Jersey Child Care Association (NJCCA), I am writing you with concern you're your proposal to broaden state-operated Pre-K in New Jersey. NJCCA represents many of the almost 4,000 privately run nursery schools, early learning centers and Pre-K schools throughout the state.

On your campaign website, under the section outlined as "My Plan" you state that you intend to:

Reform the current state-funded Pre-K system so it's not limited to a handful of districts like Newark, and use the savings to make pre-K available to all school districts at no additional cost to taxpayers with a co-pay required for families with significant means.

While your proposal appears to be well intentioned, it ignores the important contributions of privately-run child care centers in the state. While no one disputes the importance of exposing children to a system of early learning, a continued debate over the best delivery system ensues.

First, from an economic standpoint, private child care provides an existing, cost-effective option to the publicly-funded educational system. In this realm, there is no debate. In addition, for-profit child care centers support the local economy through property taxes and purchasing of goods and services in the local community. Private child care will not burden the state's pension system, but adding more school district teachers will.

Secondly, private child care was focused on the needs of Pre-K student long before the public educational system became enamored of the issue. Private child care has grown and evolved over the years, and most provide an appropriate early learning environment. Those who care to categorize private child care as glorified "baby-sitting" are flat out wrong.

Lastly, your proposal to allow parent with financial means to pay co-pays to school district for Pre-K classes represents another area where government will be given the ability to directly compete with the private sector, albeit the competition remains skewed in favor of school districts.

For example, several non-Abbott and non-transitional districts have already created a system of Pre-K, and some of those districts charge tuition that does not equal the district's published per pupil cost. How is this possible?

It's possible because capital costs are not factored into the equation, but children are taught in classrooms that have debt service costs to the taxpayers. Pension and benefit costs are also uniformly ignored or lowballed.

Finally, keep in mind, that in the privately-run system, centers may have incentives to ensure that children attend classes on a regular basis. In public education, this is not the case, and there have been reports that absentee rates in classes have reached 49 percent.

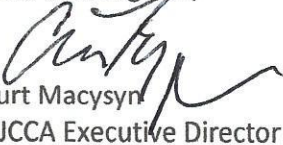
While we certainly appreciate your willingness to address this important issue, and we believe that your proposal is strengthened through the inclusion of private child care that embraces a voucher system. Under a voucher system, there exists little doubt that more children will be able to participate in a system of effective early learning.

I have taken the liberty of providing a fact sheet to you that articulates the important of private child care in New Jersey. We believe that you will agree with us that a voucher system creates the most equity.

I am available to you should you wish to discuss this vital issue further.

Thank you for taking time to hear our concerns. I wish you continued success and can be reached at **(609) 223-2223**, or via e-mail at curt@nj-cca.org.

With best regards,


Curt Macysyn
NJCCA Executive Director

c. Hon. Alfred Gaburo

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