



**CHILD HEALTH
CONNECTION**

Dear Governor Polis,

Child care is a \$749.3 million industry with over 9,000 centers in Colorado. If this industry collapses it will have radical effects in every economic sector of our state. Already hundreds of child care centers have permanently closed throughout the State. For example, over 40 centers have closed their doors in El Paso County alone. We anticipate more centers will close their doors in upcoming months unless a *realistic* long term plan is implemented.

We represent Child Health Connection, a nursing practice of 13 Child Care Health Consultants (CCHCs) with over 120 years of combined experience. We oversee the health consulting needs of over 400 child care programs throughout the Front Range. The child care industry carries the weight of the economy on their backs yet lacks a strong voice in matters that influence it. The intention of this letter is to advocate on behalf of early childhood education providers regarding the distress that nurses are hearing from child care centers on the ground.

Concern regarding limits on classroom size has been voiced by child care center owners and their staff. We understand the classroom limit is in response to general social distancing guidelines that limits groups to 10 people or less. **Child care settings, however, are unique and do not fit within this one size fits all guidance.**

We have heard repeatedly from child care professionals across the Front Range, “No matter how hard we try keeping children apart, it is almost impossible.” **Children do not social distance!**

The longer social distancing remains in effect, the greater the negative impact on children and teaching staff. It is logistically impossible for centers to follow these staff to child ratios. Teachers spend more time keeping children apart and enforcing facial coverings than actually teaching curriculum. **Children do not social distance!**

The economic hardship that child care centers are currently facing will have a domino effect and radically impact our state’s economy. If classroom size is limited to no more than 10 children, centers are going to close. Sequentially, first responders, health care workers, and other essential workers will then not be able to work. This will then work its way through every sector of our economy.

Fewer centers able to remain in business = Decreased child care availability = Fewer Coloradoans able to work

We are asking for classroom sizes to be increased. Currently, classroom size is limited to 10 children per room, thereby greatly reducing enrollment often by more than 60%. The struggle



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not only lies in lost revenue, but also in staffing difficulties. There is a significant challenge for centers to meet the existing state regulations for having a lead teacher in each classroom. For many centers, this almost doubles the number of lead teachers needed. It is extremely difficult to find qualified child care staff in normal times. It is much more so during a pandemic with formidable restrictions.

We are asking for guidance that provides the most basic needs for our children, especially our at-risk population. This should encompass all areas of physical, social, and emotional wellbeing in the classroom. Children are in the lowest risk segment of the population for COVID-19 complications. Therefore, it is difficult to justify losing their daily routine and the essential needs that are provided in the group care setting. During a child's early years of development, stability provides a strong foundation for health, wellness, and growth. The sooner we can get back to "normal," the better it will be for these children, their families, and the child care industry as a whole.

We appreciate your consideration and would be available to discuss our observations further. **We believe someone from the child care industry should be at the table when these decisions are being made.** We would be glad to serve you in this capacity. Along with you, we want to support the children of Colorado and provide them with a safe and healthy environment.

Sincerely,

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For more information:

<https://coloradosun.com/2020/03/23/colorado-child-care-early-education-children-closing-coronavirus/>

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/education/2020/04/05/coronavirus-daycare-child-care-center-essential-cares-act-unemployment/2946710001/>

<https://hechingerreport.org/our-fragile-child-care-system-may-be-about-to-shatter/>

<https://www.ced.org/assets/reports/childcareimpact/181104%20CCSE%20Report%20Jan30.pdf>

<https://thehill.com/opinion/finance/488690-babies-dont-do-social-distancing>

<https://video.foxnews.com/v/6154371546001#sp=show-clips>