



Community Equity Collaborative

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28 April 2020

Menlo Park City Council
701 Laurel Street
Menlo Park, CA 94025

Dear Mayor Taylor and Honorable City Council Members,

On behalf of Community Equity Collaborative, thank you for your leadership and service during this unprecedented crisis. We are writing in hopes that you will **pay careful attention to Menlo Park's child care providers** during this pandemic, as our child care infrastructure is at **dire risk of crumbling** over the next months.

Before COVID-19 hit, Menlo Park's residents depended on the support of **58 licensed child care providers** (40 centers and 18 home-based programs). These businesses operated on **razor-thin margins** (30% of programs nationwide indicated only enough reserve to remain open for 2 weeks without income). Now all but 6 programs are closed. Of the programs offering support to children of essential workers, most are losing money due to parents' desire (even those who are essential workers) to keep their children out of group care settings.

County, state and federal relief programs for child care providers leave a huge gap in needed funding to the tune of \$9.6 billion *per month*, according to the National Women's Law Center. Even before the crisis, Menlo Park was in a child care crunch with a **shortage of 1,471 child care spaces** back in 2017.

Doing nothing now to shore up our child care system will cost Menlo Park in the relatively short run. Home-based providers are especially vital to families with infants/toddlers, children with special needs, non-traditional or extended hours, and those who live in underserved communities. And **the child care infrastructure is not easily replaceable**: a combination of local permitting and state licensing requirements, lack of usable/affordable space and extreme development expenses and timelines make child care centers one of the most complicated businesses to open.

Without child care, many of Menlo Park's residents will be unable to return to work once the shelter-in-place order is lifted. Prior to the pandemic, California businesses lost approximately \$638 million annually due to employee absences resulting from breakdowns in child care arrangements with 3/4 of mothers and 1/2 of fathers leaving the workforce or switching to a less demanding job in order to care for their children.



As you consider the City's budget tonight, we hope you will keep in mind the following opportunities to support Menlo Park's child care system:

- **Allocate CDBG funds to in-home providers.** Last night, the City of San Mateo voted to designate \$120,000 of their \$440,000 contribution to Samaritan House to home-based childcare providers.
- **Direct funds to the *COVID-19 Child Care Project*** (a regional program of Silicon Valley Community Foundation) to preserve the supply of child care in San Mateo County.

We are sure there are other opportunities to support this critical infrastructure and would welcome a conversation to explore this further.

Sincerely,



Dayna Chung and Heather Hopkins
Organizing Members