



January 6, 2021

Director Stephanie McCloud  
Ohio Department of Health  
246 N. High Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Re: Prioritizing hardest hit communities and the child care workforce for the COVID-19 vaccine

Dear Director McCloud:

Thank you for your leadership during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. We appreciate your commitment to keeping Ohioans safe and healthy. We are reaching out on behalf of Policy Matters Ohio to urge you to prioritize early childhood educators for vaccine distribution, alongside K-12 educators.

The negative health and economic impacts of COVID-19 have disproportionately impacted Ohioans of color and Ohioans with low income. The disparities between Black and white Ohioans are not new. Years of policy choices have excluded Black and brown Ohioans from building financial security and from education, health, and housing opportunities.

The vaccine distribution decision provides Ohio an opportunity to prioritize communities that have been hit hardest by the pandemic. Women make up 95% of Ohio's child care workforce and roughly 36% of the workforce are people of color, making an average wage of just \$10.65 an hour. These workers keep Ohio running. They nurture and care for children and give parents the opportunity to stay in the workforce.

Many of Ohio's child care programs have remained open throughout the entire pandemic. During the early weeks as the state's economy shut down, more than 2,000 programs chose to serve children of essential workers under a temporary pandemic licensure, without which tens of thousands of healthcare professionals, grocery clerks and other essential workers would not have been able to work. Child care providers continue to provide this critical service for children and working families. Simply put, essential workers with young children cannot work without the child care workforce remaining healthy and keeping their classrooms open.

Child care programs also fill a significant gap for families with school-aged children when school is virtual and in-person. As schools have relied on virtual learning, child care programs have become a critical resource for students whose parents continue to work. Even when schools are in-person, many children utilize before- and after-school programs, often in child care settings.

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As the essential workforce behind Ohio's workforce, we ask that the child care workforce receive the same priority for the COVID-19 vaccine as K-12 educators. Thank you again for your leadership during these difficult times and for your consideration regarding this request.

Sincerely,



Hannah Halbert, Executive Director  
Policy Matters Ohio



Will Petrik, Budget Researcher  
Policy Matters Ohio