



September 14, 2020

Dear Governor Baker and Secretary Sudders:

Thank you for your continued leadership and commitment to the health and safety of all in the Commonwealth during this pandemic. We are appreciative of your ongoing collective efforts on behalf of the early education and Out of School Time (OST) system of care. We are writing collectively to ask that you include educators and staff from early education and care and out of school time programs in the rapid coronavirus testing program for teachers in response to a potential Covid-19 cluster.

Educating and supporting our most vulnerable children and their families by providing high-quality early education and OST programming is the calling of our member agencies, and this has never been more important than during the pandemic. Our collective mission-driven member programs provide early education and school age services to the vast majority of children in the Commonwealth who receive public subsidy funding. Our programs have been dramatically destabilized during the Covid-19 pandemic and now are further destabilized by repeated classroom closures due to potential exposures and outbreaks. Long wait times of up to two weeks for testing results has led to repeated classroom closures, impacting families' access to consistent child care.

Rapid testing is a critical component of reopening our classrooms safely, and we applaud the effort to create a rapid testing program for K-12 educators that expands upon the successful Stop the Spread testing program. Rapid testing should be available to respond to potential clusters and outbreaks within early education and OST programs as well. Our centers have been open for several months without this needed rapid testing. As seen in the Boston Globe (<https://www.bostonglobe.com/2020/09/11/nation/study-kids-infected-day-care-spread-coronavirus-home/>), our educators are at risk of contracting the virus from both adults and children in child care centers. Already, dozens of Head Start and other early education

classrooms have temporarily closed due to potential exposure to Covid-19, simply in order to wait for test results that can take nearly two weeks in some regions of the Commonwealth. Now, as we watch public schools choosing to offer remote learning and those that run in-person learning have access to rapid testing for their educators, the gulf between early educators and their public school peers grows even wider. We ask that you please extend educator rapid testing to early education and care and out of school time programs in order to continue to protect the health and safety of our workforce and the children and families we serve. We thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



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