

Statement of Regina McChriston
Appearing before the Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on
Worker and Family Support
Hearing on The Child Care Crisis and the Coronavirus Pandemic
June 23, 2020

Good afternoon. Thank you to Chairman Davis and Ranking Member Walorski for holding this important hearing. My name is Regina McChriston, and I am a CT scan technician at a hospital just outside of Chicago. I am also the primary caregiver for my two-and-a-half year old daughter.

At the start of the pandemic, I was forced to choose between working my full schedule and caring for my child. My employer had hours for me to work, but I had to reduce my schedule down to one day per week because of my lack of child care. Day Childcare facilities were closed for quarantine as we all know, and for me that meant working less to make up the difference. Her father is a UPS driver and is essential as well. So for us it's very frustrating and stressful not to have childcare facilities open during this pandemic. The world counts on us and although we are willing to step up in our roles as essential workers, it feels like the rug has been snatched from underneath our feet, taking away our choice to work.

In addition to lack of care, one of the issues that I face with working as an essential Healthcare worker is child SAFETY. I am literally filled with anxiety and fear when I think about my daughter's well being while trying to focus on performing my job as a CT Technologist in the ER. As a front line healthcare worker I have witnessed just how ill people are who battle COVID-19. As we all learn about this new virus and the damage it can do, it is very important to try to quarantine but as I am an essential worker in a hospital, I am unable to do so. Our parents are

caregivers for my daughter, and they have been a big help. My mother is only able to help so much because she lost her own job. However, she is over sixty which means she's at a greater risk of becoming ill. This is another thing for me to worry about and balance as I try to care for my child and make an income.

Childcare centers provide a sound and safe, structural atmosphere that can be difficult to replicate at home. There is also a very important social component that is important for growth and development of the child, which my mother and I cannot replace. Interacting with a group of her own peers will help build confidence and teambuilding skills. There can be some uncontrolled distraction at home that can interrupt learning time. It would be better for my daughter to be in child care than at home so that she can develop social skills and bond with her peers.

However, I have major concerns about how daycare facilities can and will adjust to the new guidelines being put into place. I understand that distancing and testing are huge components in helping contain the virus and keeping everyone safer. Does this mean less children in a class? If so, funding is what's needed to make this happen. Our experience across the nation so far has shown that proper testing, PPE, and social distancing significantly reduce the risk of infection. Often, children spend more than eight hours daily with daycare workers which means that funding for testing is also very critical. I believe that certain safety measures should be put into place before sending my daughter back to daycare such as: more hand washing stations, smaller class size, and spaced-out learning stations. Daily testing with rapid results for staffing should be provided, especially for asymptomatic cases. It is quite difficult to socially distance 2 year old toddlers.

Adequate staffing is very important in providing separate entry and exit access points for parents and students.

As well as, sanitizing the restrooms frequently. Each child should be accompanied by staff during restroom/handwashing time to ensure the proper technique is applied. Before I can consider going to work full-time I need an absolute peace of mind that the above mentioned changes take place. Her father is really adamant about paying for her to maintain a place in daycare but wants to keep her home for two weeks after/if the facility reopens as another safety precaution- another strain on our budget to deal with.

The COVID-19 crisis has made it harder to care for my daughter and harder to do my job without distraction. Before we can go back to work, we need to make sure that child care is safe and available for everyone.

Thank you very much for your time, and I look forward to your questions.