

**From:** [Heather Powell](#)  
**To:** [Lisa Bruner](#)  
**Subject:** Re: Feedback for Affordable Childcare  
**Date:** Monday, May 10, 2021 4:50:15 PM

---

Thank you Lisa.  
Comments below:

I appreciate the council recognizing the importance quality childcare plays in a strong and vibrant community and applaud the idea that we would invest these one time dollars in a way that would grow both the quantity of childcare spots as well as the quality of our care.

I operate the largest licensed childcare in the county and also serve the largest % of children who receive subsidy through the Working Connections program. Kids World has long been the only childcare provider in the community that has not capped the number of children who receive subsidy. I would encourage the county to consider making it a requirement for any provider who receives any of these funds to fully eliminate capping the number of children who receive subsidy. This will allow families the freedom to choose the care that most meets their needs instead of the provider who is willing to enroll their child.

Early Achievers, the accrediting body for quality childcare has made a shift recently from having a heavy focus on the physical space to having a greater focus on the interactions with children. Reducing overhead through rent relief could allow childcare operators to invest those funds into training staff, however; there will also need to be an ongoing need to increase wages for the challenging work that is required to offer high quality care. Childcare staff are traditionally underpaid due to the slim revenue margin generated by childcare operations. Early Achievers has realized that having well appointed facilities does not benefit children if there are not high quality staff using those resources. I would encourage the County to consider an approach that not only invests in facilities, but in training grants as well.

The Department of Commerce has Early Learning Fund grants that the county could use as a model for these funds. Providing an opportunity for current or potential providers to apply for funds with the guarantee that they will operate for a set number of years based on the size of the investment. If the provider meets that obligation, the grant is forgiven in full. This will allow providers to build a plan that meets the County's objectives, but does not tie them into a one size fits all plan for increasing quality and quantity.

Universal Pre-K as proposed by the Biden Administration is going to have a significant impact on childcare operators. In places where school districts have begun to provide 4k and or 3k programs there is a significant decrease in the amount of licensed care needed. This must be a focus of decision making for these dollars. Licensed care relies on the higher ratios allowed in older classrooms to help balance the cost of serving younger children at lower ratios. Universal Pre-k will change what is needed in this community and will change how providers have to operate and the rates they will need to charge. If we want this investment to pay off for the next 40 years, we have to anticipate the changes that are coming in that time frame.

Sincerely,

**Heather Powell**

CEO  
Boys & Girls Clubs of Whatcom County  
1715 Kentucky Street  
Bellingham, WA 98229  
(360) 738-3808 Ext. 305  
[hpowell@whatcomclubs.org](mailto:hpowell@whatcomclubs.org)  
[www.whatcomclubs.org](http://www.whatcomclubs.org)

On May 10, 2021, at 8:31 AM, Lisa Bruner <[LBruner@co.whatcom.wa.us](mailto:LBruner@co.whatcom.wa.us)>  
wrote:

Good Morning,

Just a friendly reminder, if you have any feedback on the attached  
Permanent Affordable Childcare letter, please submit those  
comments by noon tomorrow, May 11<sup>th</sup>.

Thank You!

*Lisa Bruner*  
**Legislative Clerk**  
**Whatcom County Council Office**  
311 Grand Ave., Suite 105  
Bellingham, WA 98225  
**Main:** 360-778-5010  
**Direct:** 360-778-5028

<Permanent Affordable Childcare Letter.pdf>