

Dear Members of the House Committee on Human Services,

We write to ask you to invest a portion of the \$1.25 billion stimulus package into UVM's childcare center. UVM's president announced last week the closure of the center, with all employees laid off and families who had counted on that childcare now without. The administration argued that the COVID epidemic worsened UVM's finances and that it could no longer afford to subsidize the center at a cost of \$500,000 per year.

The center's deficit had already been reduced by half with a variety of structural and other changes and there were plans in place to continue to reduce this deficit. We therefore believe bridge funding could help preserve this childcare center, a model center that pays teachers well and is renowned for its teacher education and best practice.

Specifically, we are asking that you allocate \$500,000 of the stimulus money to support UVM's childcare center for one year, contingent on the agreement that UVM will use that year to work with faculty and staff, and the College of Education and Social Services to reorganize to get the child care center to a place where it is financially sustainable.

As you are aware, many childcare centers in Vermont are closing due to the effects of COVID. We believe working families cannot afford to lose more slots because it will result in parents not being able to work to provide for their families.

**I wrote the letter below regarding my further thoughts on the issue:
Response to the Closing of the UVM Campus Children's School: (CCS)**

As a faculty member of Early Childhood Education, a former mentor teacher at the lab school and a parent of two teenage children who graduated from the CCS, I am starkly aware of the excellent and critical work of CCS to serve some families, all of the early childhood education students, many UVM undergrads from across the university for work-study, 70 plus lucky children each year who got in, and the droves of early childhood teachers and other stakeholders who came to visit this critical demonstration site for high quality early care and education from around the state, country and world.

Yes, CCS was too small, but it was both exceptional and essential. The answer is to expand it, not destroy it. I wish each and every child and family could have and will have the opportunity to learn and develop in such a school. Every child deserves that kind of start to life and every

family deserves the support and peace of mind that their children will receive the very best kind of care and education.

For me, this tragic event echoes other related patterns of injustice in this country as they all yank our social wellness and civic responsibility ten steps backwards, maybe more. I believe that access to high quality early education is one of the critical antidotes to systemic bias and racism in this country. It's a profound, evidence-based prevention strategy, as children learn right from birth, how to develop a positive self-identity, authentically appreciate diversity, recognize incidents of bias and learn to advocate peacefully for justice. It's what we do in early childhood education.

Metabolizing the irony in all of this, given the mission of our University, is painful. It's obvious that the intersectionality of all these tragic events are not an accident. Values must be re-examined. It will be very illuminating to learn about the administration's true priorities if/when further cuts are made, and how these choices align with our Common Ground and the strategic plan of individual colleges.

Given our university, our state and our country's desperate need for access to high quality early care and education, I believe it was an indefensible decision, regardless of price tag or context. It's an offense to our collective humanity and will end up costing the university far more in FMLA costs, decreased productivity of UVM employees alone and the insidious fall out of distrust.

Students in our early education program are hurting and angry, parents are protesting, faculty are trying to steady a ship that seems to be sinking at the hands of its own leaders. I am committed to persisting and re-envisioning the context of preservice teacher training in ways that are responsive and progressive. I want to be a part of the solution to ensuring access to high quality early care and education for each and every child in our community. I passionately believe in the UVM Early Childhood Education Program and our mission to serve the DOE and our students...who will then serve the families and children of Vermont and our country. I believe it's one way to break the cycle of systemic racism and hate. The Early Childhood Program, in partnership with others, has the opportunity to be leaders in fostering a new, more inspired future for ALL children and families.

Thank you for your advocacy and support.

Best wishes,

Lauren

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(she/her/hers -[Pronouns: A Resource](#))

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