

Dear Members of the House Committee on Human Services

I'm sure you will be receiving many emails like this in the coming days. My wife and I are expecting our first child this August, and like many parents in the Burlington area, we are deeply concerned about our ability to find childcare. The recent closure of the UVM Children's School is a devastating blow to the families who are currently enrolled (not to mention staff), but also to all local families who struggle to find childcare.

I write to join the chorus of affected, 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 \$550,000 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.

We attach to our letter a commentary written by former Dean Miller and former Associate Dean Seguinio at UVM who provide further background on the context of this challenge here at UVM.

Thank you for your consideration,

Mike

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