

PRESS RELEASE

April 2, 2020

Seattle Education Association Response to SPS Childcare

Wednesday, April 1, Seattle Public Schools sent a message to members of the Seattle Education Association (SEA) mandating that they provide childcare.

SEA recognizes the sacrifice our first responders are making for the greater community during the COVID-19 pandemic, and that there is a need for childcare to be provided for these essential workers and their children.

SEA has been working with the District to come to agreement regarding how to provide childcare, and seeks a voluntary plan that ensures all safety guidelines and requirements are in place. Many SEA members have expressed interest in supporting these efforts and have already signed up to volunteer to provide childcare.

We reiterate our proposal that all services be voluntary.

SEA is aware that the District and City of Seattle have been engaged in difficult conversations regarding childcare, that the city has threatened to withhold levy funding for valuable Pre-K programs that serve Seattle's most high need and marginalized students. This jeopardizes critical early education support for students, as well as jobs during a health and economic crisis.

SEA expects the Mayor and the District to identify more appropriate methods for staffing childcare centers, including supporting the many community based professional childcare providers that are currently struggling. Many of these neighborhood community-based childcare providers are operated by women and people of color and are being negatively impacted during this pandemic.

"SEA members are dedicated to our students and the frontline workers in this public health crisis. The pressure from the City of Seattle to leverage the use of levy funds for critical preschool programs to fund childcare at this time, ignores struggling community-based childcare providers, and erodes the critical support our educators are providing to families and students," said Michael Tamayo, President of SEA.

SEA's governing body voted to reject the plan as presented but is committed to working with the District to find alternatives to ensure that there is safe and quality childcare provided for first responders, health care workers and families in need.