

Dear Early Learning Council,

My name is Jen Bishop, and I am Human Resources at ChildRoots, a group of 3 certified child care centers in Portland.

I'm writing to share that it was an unexpected, unwelcome blow to learn that the [Emergency Background Check process will be paused](#) after June 7<sup>th</sup> and likely discontinued thereafter.

The advance (albeit inadequate) notice is appreciated, but it in no way compensates for the negative effects that this decision will have upon providers statewide.

I have been responsible for recruiting new talent for ChildRoots for over 5 years, and I have never experienced such a dearth of qualified candidates, let alone candidates who are already enrolled in the Central Background Registry (CBR) and work-ready. I will not waste your time sharing statistics or theories on why we are facing such a shortage, but I will share my personal and professional opinion that removing our ability to employ otherwise qualified and capable candidates because the Emergency Background Check is unavailable will decrease the number of families we can serve, increase unemployment, and diminish the health and well-being of those who will have to work harder and longer to compensate for workers unable to work because they are waiting for their CBR to clear.

As business operators, we are already stretched beyond our breaking point in terms of employee compensation, and the increasingly competitive nature of recruiting in our industry is forcing us to choose between offering unsustainable compensation to recruit precious few candidates OR offering what we can actually afford to receive even fewer, if any, candidates. I must restate that I have never experienced such a dismal labor pool, and it is not unique to ChildRoots. The child care industry in Portland is collaborative and communicative, and our fellow providers are experiencing the same challenges. I'm certain that you're hearing from many of them today.

It seems especially unwise and hypocritical to remove this resource in light of the state's recognition that a lack of available child care is preventing unemployed people – especially women – to return to work. Forcing providers to wait weeks in order to bring new employees onsite, let alone halting their ability to keep currently EBC-approved but not CBR-approved employees onsite, will only exacerbate the crisis of insufficient supply and increased demand for child care.

If it is not possible to extend the availability of the Emergency Background Check (EBC), offering CBR applicants a conditional enrollment or allowing them to work under close supervision while they await their enrollment result would be an invaluable temporary solution to this problem, so I implore you to take bold action in that direction.

Child care providers have taken on so much risk throughout this pandemic, and we continue to do so. **This work is still not safe, and it is harder than it has ever been.** Despite widespread COVID vaccinations for adults and older children, the

children we primarily serve remain unvaccinated, and COVID cases are still emerging in our centers. In one of our centers, we recently had our first classroom cases (5!) despite all of our caution and care.

To be presented with yet another obstacle to operating during this pandemic feels like an insult.

A temporary solution to address the pause in the Emergency Background Check is absolutely necessary, and a more permanent solution to the persistent delays of the CBR process in general is just as vital, although certainly not something we can expect you to prioritize at this point. When we are all better able to breathe and start taking steps forward again, please, please find a way to make the CBR enrollment process faster. It has been needed for a long time, and the pandemic has only revealed the direness of the need.

Thank you for this opportunity to share and for doing what you can to meet these important needs.

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