



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Velmanette Montgomery

Senator Velmanette Montgomery Letter To Commissioner John B. Mattingly re: Day Cares

Velmanette Montgomery

August 25, 2009

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August 26, 2009

Commissioner John B. Mattingly
Administration for Children Services
150 William Street
18th Floor
New York, NY 10038

Dear Commissioner Mattingly:

There were a number of concerns raised at our public hearing over the proposed closure of over 120 ACS day care classrooms, and the transfer of over 3,500 four and five year old children from subsidized child care to kindergarten. Thanks to federal stimulus funding, and the intervention of the City Council, those closures were averted.

It is our understanding that your agency assumes that in the future four and five year olds will attend kindergarten instead of subsidized child care. However, we do not know, logistically, how this plan would be implemented. The same uncertainties that caused distress among parents and the provider community a few months ago have not, to our knowledge, been resolved.

Specifically, how does ACS propose that these thousands of small children be transported to their kindergarten classrooms? And how can New York's overcrowded kindergarten classrooms sustain the influx without violating the Department of Education's class size requirements? Moreover, subsidized care programs stay open until 5:00 pm, while children who are in kindergarten cannot stay past 3:00 pm; is the Out of School Time system capable of providing care for all of the children whose parents work past 5 pm? These are just a few of the questions that were raised in light of ACS' proposal this past summer, and as far as we can tell these questions were never fully answered.

Assemblyman Scarborough and I are advocates for early childhood education and quality child care, because we understand, as you do, that these services provide the foundation for children's success in later years. Given the stakes, it is imperative that we work together and fully explore the consequences, intended or otherwise, of transitioning four and five year olds out of subsidized care and to kindergarten.

The school year begins on September ninth, just a short time from now. We expect our constituents, parents and providers alike, will approach us over the days ahead expecting answers to the questions we have asked you. We need your input before then. We also ask you to participate in a full and open discussion, outside of the contentious budget process, and in advance of the implementation of transition plans by your agency, about these issues.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Senator Velmanette Montgomery

18th Senate District

Chair, Senate Children & Families Committee
Committee

Assemblyman William Scarborough

29th Assembly District

Chair, Assembly Children & Families

Attached is the Commissioner's response to the Senator's letter.