

## THE COOP RESPONDS TO CHILDCARE LETTER

May 17, 2022

Dear Brian,

The Coop is extremely proud that it was able to offer free childcare for more than 40 years to members while they shopped and worked. The COVID pandemic changed many things about how the Coop is run, some positive and some negative. One of those negatives is the temporary loss of childcare.

One reason childcare has not come back yet is because the childcare room is currently being used as a food processing center and warehouse for aisle 2 bulk items. During the pandemic one of the store's biggest points of congestion was aisle 2, the narrowest aisle in the Coop. The time it took members to bag and label their own bulk items caused long lines inside the store. Now that we are bagging the majority of bulk items with a giant hopper in the former childcare space, aisle 2 is significantly less crowded.

Another important factor in halting childcare are the public health risks. The Coop has not resolved the dilemmas of having unvaccinated children in a small space, providing social distancing for children and recruiting members who want to work with children who are unvaccinated. These are the dilemmas schools, after-school programs, and camps have been facing and continue to face. We are less prepared than these institutions to bring children into our space in a safe way for all children and adults.

A final thought to remember is that even when the Coop offered childcare, it was never a guarantee or a right. If childcare was closed, due to either lack of member-workers or because the room reached capacity, members were still responsible for their shifts.

It's unfortunate we can't predict when the temporary cessation of childcare will end. We look forward to that day.

Sincerely,

*Karen Mancuso*

*Membership Coordinator*