

BRING BACK CHILDCARE: A RESPONSE TO THE COOP'S MAY LETTER ABOUT CHILDCARE

October 25, 2022

Letters to the Editor



ILLUSTRATION BY GABRIEL WILLOW

Dear Karen,

I am responding to your May letter in the *Gazette* regarding bringing back childcare.

The Coop states that the two main reasons that the Coop cannot currently bring back childcare is that the food processing machine currently occupies the old childcare room, and the public health risks. I wish to address these one at a time.

One: The “machine.” I have seen and witnessed this machine, and can appreciate all the value and expediency it has brought to the Coop. However, it does not seem big enough that another space could not be found for it elsewhere in the Coop. I am not one to say where exactly it should go, but if the basement is not an option, the meeting room certainly could be. This room is currently used for one or two (or zero) office members eating their lunch. Orientation meetings no longer happen there. It is a viable option. Space at the Coop has always been tight, and yet the Coop has always found a way.

Two: Public health risks. All children six months and older are now eligible to be vaccinated. On November 1, the mayor will strike the vaccine mandate for workers. Though I am personally all for the vaccine, whether people are vaccinated or not has been negligible on their ability to transmit COVID since the arrival of Omicron and its sub-variants. It should also be noted that childcare is an optional service that the Coop offers, and that people who may not be comfortable interacting with this particular population, one prone to runny noses and not using masks correctly (if at all), do not have to engage. Likewise for parents who do not want to bring their children in to childcare.

But most parents or people who regularly interact with their own and other children accept these inherent risks in exchange for living a regular life after the trauma of the pandemic. If anything, bringing back childcare would most likely make the Coop safer for our more vulnerable members, by not forcing them to be around mask-less children on the Coop floor. (Any parent who has brought their child with them to the Coop will tell you how impossible it is to keep a mask correctly on their child while here, especially given that they are being paraded in front of an endless array of snacks.) I would also argue that social distancing at the Coop in general is a non-starter. It is rarely a part of how any of us interact at this point, and one only has to

spend five minutes on the Coop floor to witness this fact.

With all due respect, the Coop's arguments in this matter are outdated and its inflexible stance towards childcare a bit stubborn. The Coop is not a normal grocery store, in that it requires its members to work. Providing childcare enables parents to reliably work their shifts. The Coop has so far been unwilling to accept and accommodate this reality, and the time has come for this to change.

In cooperation,

Maya Solov y