**3.31.22 UPDATED DRAFT:**

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**Date:** [Enter Date]

**To:** [Mayor Lungo - Koehn](https://www.medfordma.org/mayor2/)

mayor@medford-ma.gov

**From:**  [Your Name

Your Email or Address]

**RE: What is the Path to Expanding After-school for Working Families in Medford?**

Dear Mayor Lungo - Koehn,

The City of Medford is failing working families with young, school-aged children due to a lack of adequate after-school programming. Year after year, scores of families find out that after-school program capacity in our city has not kept up with the influx of new families moving into Medford. Shortly after finding out how few families are added each year to the MPS program, there is the rude awakening of how scant the private program offerings are in Medford. These families are then left to solve after-school care on their own, along with frustrating questions about why there isn’t proactive outreach about the lottery to parents of rising kindergartners and the lack of transparency regarding the waitlist

It cannot be overstated how anxious and angry a parent can get when faced with nothing but bad options to make up for systemic failure. To acutely illustrate this problem, you will find some recent testimonials at the end of this letter, taken from a survey of over 100 families–the frustration, anxiety and desperation in these testimonials cannot be ignored.

**A responsible City government does not require its citizens to individually solve systemic failures it alone has the ability to fix.**

Before- and after-school care for children at the K-6th grade level is a basic infrastructure requirement that is essential to supporting working families. The current lack of programming reflects an antiquated system that assumes parents (historically, almost always mothers) are available to stay home or tolerate underemployment in order to care for their children after school. This assumption has been out of touch with reality for a very, very long time. The assumption injures working families, relies on gender stereotypes, perpetually disadvantages women, and ignores the best interest of Medford’s children.

**Medford cannot be seen as an inclusive, thriving and diverse community if it continues to perpetuate the systemic failure of inadequate care for its children after school**.

There are solutions, if only there was leadership. Organizations in neighboring communities are willing and eager to expand to Medford but cannot find adequate space, whether within city, school or commercial buildings. It’s also obvious that MPS after-school program expansion is possible - it was done last school year and the City must build on that success. Even with the modest program expansion last year, enrollment is still below pre-pandemic levels. We need a combination of these approaches to meet our growing city’s before- and after-school needs.

For many working Medford families with children at the elementary level, after-school care is the most important issue. There are families who are choosing private school or considering moving out of Medford due to the lack of after-school support.

**We are asking that you put this issue at the very top of your priority list and announce a path to expanding after-school for working families in Medford.**

Let the working families of Medford who are struggling know what you will do to fix this problem, if not for this coming school year, then for the next.

Thank you,

[your name] - parent and voter in Medford, MA

[Your name] Parent and Voter *or* Supporter of Parents and Voter in Medford, MA

[YourAddress]

**ENCLOSURE**: [LINK TO TESTIMONIALS](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1NyEYHnet2CCF-l6mVt03OFNA_p5tty_7/view?usp=sharing) (Also attached)

**EXAMPLE TESTIMONIALS**

**The following testimonials are a select few from a March 2022 survey of Medford parents who were asked about the impact of limited after-school options on their family; I urge you to read the FULL list provided as a separate attachment. It is a powerful heartbreaking account of how this crisis is impacting Medford families.**

**~First and foremost, the [MPS after-school] process is not well communicated at all.** In my third year of applying, it is still a mystery that requires multiple emails and follow ups to get the bare minimum poorly communicated information. I**t is frustrating and disheartening.** Frankly, **after school care should be available to all** students on a sliding scale so that caregivers (mostly women) of all economic levels have the opportunity to work and not by burdened by the high cost of child care which means many of us choose to forgo it all together. , Secondly **Our family has absorbed economic impacts** that will follow us for years, as I’ve had to take work that is under full time to be available to pick up my child and then provide enrichment or engaged activities. I realize that this is a privilege that I can provide this but **it is at the detriment to my overall earning potential.**

~When we didn’t get into the Roberts after school program during our son’s Kindergarten year, it was very stressful. **We both work full-time and we had no idea how we were going to find after school care.** Luckily, we were eventually able to get a spot at the Salem Street Studio after school program. **The impact of not knowing how you will find a reliable after school program is very stressful for parents** and is challenging to resolve.

**~I had to stop working**

**~**Our child will enter MPS in fall of 2023. **We are a two parent household where both parents are teachers** in a district with extended school hours and multiple after school options that pick up at our elementary school. We would hope the same for **MPS to have before and after school options for every child that needs it -** especially given the number of half-day Wednesdays.

**~**As teachers, we fully understand that school is a place for learning - it is not daycare. That said, **MPS (and Medford) needs to do more to address the needs of working parents to expand surround-care options** through in-house offerings or engaging community partners.

**~**We just moved to Medford and we’re shocked to hear from local friends about the limited options for after school at Brooks**. Had we known this it may have affected our decision to move to West Medford with a plan to attend MPS** vs communities with robust and easy access after school programs for their public schools. We are a two working parent households and reliable after school is extremely important when our son enters Kindergarten in 2023.

**~after-school care is the NUMBER ONE concern of families with 2 working parents** transitioning from full-time daycare to Medford public school. Medford cannot keep and attract young families, who are great for the community and economy of Medford, without addressing this.

**~**I want my children to be raised in a thriving, multicultural, multiracial society. **If only families with "afternoon nannies" or Au Pairs or stay at home parents can survive here, it's not a place that I want to raise my children.**

**—--- END —------**

**Optionally, you can CC any of these address to broaden the message to our city officials that we are asking for leadership at this time to solve this pivotal systematic issue**

CC: [Superintendent](https://www.mps02155.org/about-2/central-administration/): medouardvincent@medford.k12.ma.us

 [Assistant School Superintendent for Elementary](https://www.mps02155.org/about-2/central-administration/):sgalusi@medford.k12.ma.us

[Director of Family & Community Engagement:](https://www.mps02155.org/about-2/central-administration/) mfidlercarey@medford.k12.ma.us

[Office of Before & After School:](https://www.mps02155.org/about-2/central-administration/) before-afterschool@medford.k12.ma.us

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