



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on November 26, 2018

D.C. City Council: Parents Need License for Kids in Playgroups

The city council of Washington, D.C., recently held a hearing on a bill that would require parents participating in play groups to obtain a permit or be fined for operating a daycare without a license.

Seriously.

Here are a few highlights from a story critical of the proposed ordinance, as published in the *Washington Post*:



For 45 years, generations of 2-year-olds have been meeting each week in a local church to play through the Capitol Hill Cooperative Play School. Some D.C. government officials now are trying to regulate the program, which they contend is an illegal child-care facility....

On Sept. 7, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education investigators inspected a playgroup of toddlers to assess whether the cooperative was an illegal daycare. The investigators issued Capitol Hill Cooperative Play School parents a “statement of deficiencies,” alleging that the Capitol Hill Cooperative Play School was violating the regulations that apply to a “child development facility.”

The Capitol Hill Cooperative Play School parents have developed some simple rules over the years. Supervising parents should not be distracted by their work or phones during the playgroup. Parents are required to submit emergency contact information and medical treatment forms for each child. Families must report to the group when their toddler has a contagious illness. The group has a plan for what to do in the event of an emergency....

These seem like wise precautions to take in the best interest of the children. But to the D.C. government, these rules are evidence that the parents are running an illegal child-care facility.

Simply put, a playgroup that has been meeting since the '70s might soon be forced to quit meeting because the government of the District of Columbia thinks that if a group of parents meet to let their children play together and they agree on a few rules to keep the kids safe, then the group is no longer a play group, but is an organized “child development facility” and must be licensed.

The city council of Washington, D.C., is trying to literally outlaw the nannies and make itself into a “nanny state!”

The author of the *Washington Post* article — herself a mother that hopes to someday be able to participate in a playgroup — points to the (perhaps unintended) irony of the proposed city ordinance that would punish parents who take steps to safeguard their children.

“Ironically, if the Office of the State Superintendent of Education has its way and is allowed to regulate this playgroup out of existence, it would be creating a disincentive for parents to self-regulate, as a playgroup with no safety rules would presumably be on stronger legal standing,”

So, read logically, the members of the D.C. City Council supporting this proposal — Chairman Phil



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Mendelson and Councilmember Charles Allen — want to remove parents' incentive to protect their children who participate in playgroups.

In this case, the city council is considering a bill that would usurp the right of parents and insinuate itself directly in the decision of what is or is not safe for the district's children.

One is reminded of the statement of George Mason during the Virginia Ratifying Convention that a government without limits would "swallow up all our rights."

The author of the *Post* article, Karin Lips, recognizes this effort for what it is: the first step in what could be a long train of regulatory replacement of parental rights. Said Lips,

But this regulatory encroachment could be the District's first step toward broader government overreach in this area and the crowding-out of voluntary associations. From nanny-shares to babysitting co-ops to regularly scheduled times to play at public parks, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education investigators could find new opportunities to crack down on the voluntary ways that D.C. families approach playtime and child care for their children.

I'll close this article on attempted paternalism on the part of the Washington, D.C., city council with words about the natural authority of parents and the granted, provisional power of the government written by the eminent martyr for liberty, Algernon Sidney:

As the right of Noah was divided amongst the children he left, and when he was dead, no one of them depended on the other, because no one of them was father of the other; and the right of a father can only belong to him that is so, the like must forever attend every other father in the world. This paternal power must necessarily accrue to every father: He is a king by the same right as the sons of Noah; and how numerous soever families may be upon the increase of mankind, they are all free, till they agree to recede from their own right, and join together in, or under one government, according to such laws as best please themselves.

If parents in Washington, D.C., allow this proposal to be enacted, they have no one to blame but themselves, for their government exists only, as the Declaration of Independence plainly proclaims, "to effect their Safety and Happiness." If that government goes beyond those boundaries, "it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security."

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