



DATE: February 24, 2022 **COMMITTEE:** House Ways and Means
BILL NO: House Bill 725
BILL TITLE: Children - Therapeutic Child Care Program – Funding
POSITION: Support

PACT: Helping Children with Special Needs, an affiliate of the Kennedy Krieger Institute, supports House Bill 725.

Bill Summary:

House Bill 725 establishes a Therapeutic Child Care Program to provide specialized child care and early childhood education for children with developmental disabilities, physical disabilities or delays in social, emotional or behavioral functioning. The bill includes an annual appropriation, beginning in FY24, of \$45,000 for every child served who has a developmental delay, physical disability, and/or delay in social emotional or behavioral functioning. For FY25, and each year thereafter, that amount will increase by the Consumer Price Index or 1.5%.

Background:

PACT: Helping Children with Special Needs, Inc. operates two child care centers in the Baltimore Metropolitan area for young children with complex health care needs and/or developmental disabilities and infants and toddlers who are experiencing homelessness. Kennedy Krieger understands the costs and resources required to provide specialized child care programming.

World of Care Medical Child Care

- Only child care center in the Baltimore Metropolitan area for young children (ages birth to five years) needing daily nursing care and specialized equipment not available in typical child care centers, including children with:
 - Cardiac and pulmonary disorders requiring cardiorespiratory monitors and supplemental oxygen
 - Feeding disorders requiring nourishment through, for example, nasogastric tubes
 - Epilepsy and other severe neurological disorders
 - Organ transplants and other complex surgeries
 - Juvenile-onset (Type I) diabetes mellitus
- Comprehensive services including daily skilled nursing care/interventions, occupational, physical and speech therapy

Therapeutic Nursery for Homeless Infants and Toddlers

- Only Early Head Start/child care center in Baltimore City providing specialized attachment-based, trauma-informed care and education for infants and toddlers whose families are currently living in homeless shelters or transitioning back to the community
- Mental health services for parents using research-based interventions

Rationale:

Families and caregivers for children with complex medical needs have very few resources for medically supported care and early childhood education. Often, this results in reduced parental employment. For those children experiencing homelessness, they are at heightened risk for a number of adverse childhood experiences, including, but not limited to: learning disabilities and major mental health disorders that can lead to the continued cycle of complex intergenerational trauma.



At Kennedy Krieger, we believe it is part of our mission to serve these children and their families through our early childhood programs. Through our programs, children are in a safe, stimulating MSDE-accredited (five-star Maryland EXCELS rating), childcare center with other children and are better prepared for entry into school. Their special needs are met through available occupational, physical and speech therapies, and behavioral services. Additionally, parents may return to work, leading to increased parent earnings and benefits and a rise in state tax revenue (2008 study by Dr. David Greenberg U.M.B.C. professor subcontracted by D.H.M.H.).

PACT's goal is to serve all children in need, regardless of family income. While PACT receives government, foundation and corporate grants, as well as donations from generous private donors, our funding does not cover the actual cost of providing the complex array of services our children and families require. Additionally, our programs need sustained state funding that reflects annual cost-of-living adjustments. **This legislation would provide additional financial stability to ensure that we can continue to operate these important programs.**

PACT: Helping Children with Special Needs requests a favorable report on House Bill 725.

PACT: Helping Children with Special Needs, Inc. is an independent affiliate of Kennedy Krieger Institute. PACT retains its own 501(c) (3) status, a separate board of directors and is responsible for securing funds for its programs. Our mission is to promote the development of young children with special needs and their families.