



February 24, 2022

To: The House Ways and Means Committee
From: Adventist HealthCare
Re: HB725 – Therapeutic Childcare Program – Funding

POSITION: SUPPORT

HB725 establishes an annual appropriation to support the development and education of some of the most vulnerable children in our state. Therapeutic Childcare Programs provide specialized childcare and educational programs for children with significant developmental disabilities, physical disabilities, or delays in social, emotional or behavioral functioning.

The Lourie Center for Children's Social & Emotional Wellness, a member of Adventist HealthCare, operates a Therapeutic Childcare Program focused on children experiencing significant social, emotional, and behavioral issues. Founded in 1983 as an outgrowth of a National Institute of Mental Health clinical research study, the Lourie Center is a pioneer and leader in the field of infant and child mental health. It now serves more than 4,000 children and families in the Washington metropolitan area.

The Lourie Center's program integrates early childhood mental health and education programming, serving families with high-risk children ages 3 to 5. Many of these children have experienced trauma in their home life and have been expelled from mainstream preschools or daycares due to safety concerns and disruptive behavior. By partnering with parents and caregivers and surrounding children with professionally trained staff, the program promotes the child's development and supports the family as a whole. It has an 80% success rate of integrating children into mainstream education programs.

The Lourie Center is one of three entities currently operating these programs in Maryland. Each program may serve a different population, but all serve children with the intense needs who require specialized care and whose development has been significantly disrupted. Despite increasing operational costs, these programs had been level funded for many years, but this was recently significantly reduced statewide. Programs are forced to rely on charitable donations to maintain services, jeopardizing their continued sustainability. HB725 would provide a much-needed baseline of reliable funding for these vital programs.

For these reasons, Adventist HealthCare supports HB725 and encourages the committee to give **a favorable report.**

