

Testimony Supporting SB637 Children - Therapeutic Nursery Program - Funding Submitted by The Arc Montgomery County

Goal of Testimony: Ensure that children with developmental disabilities and delays *and* with significant medical conditions have access to comprehensive and inclusive early child care and medical care services through on-going funding and support.

Program Information:

Infants and toddlers with developmental disabilities who are medically fragile cannot attend typical child care, because their needs are too great to be accommodated in that setting. They require specialized nursing care, specially-trained staff and team collaboration between and among physicians, therapists, case managers and other community partners.

The Arc Montgomery County operates the only fully inclusive child care center in the Metropolitan Washington/Maryland area for infants and toddlers with developmental disabilities who are medically fragile.

- Only child care center in this area for infants and toddlers (ages birth to five years) needing daily nursing care and specialized equipment not available in typical childcare centers, i.e. children with:
 - Heart and breathing problems requiring monitors and oxygen
 - Eating disorders requiring nourishment through feeding tubes
 - Severe seizure disorders
 - Organ transplants and other serious surgeries
 - Juvenile Type I diabetes
- Comprehensive services include onsite nursing assessments, daily skilled nursing care/interventions, occupational, physical and speech therapy
- Family Coordinator available to assist families in accessing subsidies and other medical and child care services

Service Area

- Montgomery County and surrounding jurisdictions – northern Prince Georges and lower Frederick counties

Benefits of Medical Child Care

- \$1.3 million net annual benefit to State of Maryland due to reduced need for private duty nursing, increased parent earnings and benefits, and a rise in state tax revenues (2008 study by Dr. David Greenberg U.M.B.C. professor subcontracted by D.H.M.H.)
- Parents can return to work and/or school
- Children are in a safe, stimulating child care center with their typical peers and are better prepared for entry into school
- Children's special needs are met through onsite collaboration with Montgomery County Infant and Toddler Program (MCITP) including occupational, physical and speech therapy (as needed)
- Children most at risk for entering school unprepared (i.e. children with disabilities), according to the Maryland Early Childhood Advisory Council Three year action plan, 2009-2012, have access to quality care and education

continued on next page

Administration

Connecting People of All Ages & Abilities with Their Communities to Build Inclusive Lives



- Onsite fully-inclusive preschool special education program “Building Bridges” for children 3 -5 years old with an IEP
- Children’s medical conditions may improve with less frequent need for hospitalizations due to daily nursing assessments and interventions

Grant History

- In 2007, MSDE’s “Medically Fragile Children Birth to Five” was awarded to five programs, including The Arc Montgomery County’s program for infants and toddlers; one program closed in 2010
- Each center received approximately \$200,000 a year to serve medically fragile and other at risk children
- Subsequently, funding was dropped to \$137,500 for each of four centers and has remained stagnant despite rising costs

Impact of Continued Funding:

- A fully-inclusive child care center will remain open to provide a seamless delivery of services for over 150 children 6 weeks to 10 years old
- Specifically, 38 children (birth-five years) needing specialized child care services will receive their medical, child care and special education services at one location
- Young children who are most at risk of entering school not “fully ready to learn” (i.e. children with disabilities and chronic illnesses), as outlined in Maryland Early Childhood Advisory Council Three year action plan, 2009-2012, will have access to quality early care and education
- Parents will not have to stop working, leave school or cut back on work hours to stay at home with their medically-fragile child

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