

February 18, 2020

To: Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
From: Anne Arundel Medical Center of Luminis Health
Re: SB637 – Children – Therapeutic Nursery Programs – Funding

POSITION: SUPPORT

SB637 establishes an annual appropriation to support Therapeutic Nursery Programs which provide specialized childcare and early childhood education for children with developmental disabilities, physical disabilities or delays in social, emotional or behavioral functioning.

At Anne Arundel Medical Center, we see about 350 annual discharges of pediatric admissions that require ongoing and further mental health care. Mental Health services are of dire need for our community, highlighted again in the Community Health Needs Assessment most recently published. We are committed to supporting the mental health needs for all our patients. The opening of the J. Kent McNew Family Medical Center expands access for adult beds and offers post-acute services for adults and adolescents. In addressing our younger, vulnerable population, we have developed initiatives to bring together community partners and the hospital. This upcoming May, Dr. Monica Jones, Chair of Women's and Children's Services and Dr. Lauren Fitzpatrick, Medical Director for Pediatrics are hosting a *Healthy Minds: A Focus on Pediatric Mental Health* seminar. This event aims to discuss resources available to evaluate and manage pediatric mental health in primary care and outpatient settings, as well as exploring gaps and discussing solutions to improve care coordination of children and adolescents with mental health symptoms. In addition, we have identified the need in our community to partner with organizations like the Lourie Center for Children's Social & Emotional Wellness, a member of Adventist HealthCare, to address the rising needs of young children. According to our most recent Community Health Needs Assessment for Anne Arundel County, there was an 11.4% increase in early childhood (0-5 years of age) individuals served and an 8.4% increase in childhood (6-12 years of age) individuals served from FY17 to FY18. The Lourie Center is a private, non-profit agency based in Rockville, MD with a mission to improve the social and emotional health of young children and their families. 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, regardless of ability to pay.

The Center currently operates a Therapeutic Nursery Program (TNP) – an integrated early childhood mental health and education program, serving 36 families with high-risk children ages 3 to 5. These children exhibit significant social and emotional issues – many have experienced trauma in their home life and have been expelled from mainstream preschools or

daycares due to safety concerns and disruptive behavior. The TNP partners with parents and caregivers to effectively support the child's development and the family as a unit. The program has an 80% success rate of integrating children back into mainstream education programs.

The Lourie Center is one of three entities operating TNPs in Maryland. Each program focuses on a different population, but all serve children with the intense needs that often cannot be met in other settings. The programs had been level funded for many years, despite increasing costs. In 2019, however, TNP funding was dramatically reduced statewide. This reduction threatens the sustainability of all TNP programs. SB637 would provide a much-needed baseline of reliable funding for these vital programs as they continue to work with us in bringing this service to Anne Arundel County in order to provide the support necessary to prevent future emergency department visits.

For these reasons, Anne Arundel Medical Center of Luminis Health supports SB637 and encourages the committee to give a **favorable report**.