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February 19, 2020

To: Senate Budget and Taxation Committee  
From: Adventist HealthCare  
Re: SB637 – Children – Therapeutic Nursery Programs – Funding

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

SB637 establishes an annual appropriation to support Therapeutic Nursery Programs which provide specialized child care and early childhood education for children with 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, 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. Founded in 1983 as an outgrowth of a six-year clinical research project by the National Institute of Mental Health, 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 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 whole. 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 who require specialized care and whose learning has been significantly disrupted. 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.

For these reasons, Adventist HealthCare supports SB637 and encourages the committee to give **a favorable report.**

