



January 31, 2024

**House Bill 377
Therapeutic Childcare Grant Program-Funding- Alterations
Ways and Means Committee**

Position: SUPPORT

The Maryland Association of Resources for Families and Youth (MARFY) is an association of private child caring organizations providing foster care, group homes, and other services through more than 200 programs across Maryland. The members of MARFY represent providers who serve Maryland's most vulnerable children who are in out of home placements due to abuse, neglect or severe mental health, and medical needs. We operate group homes, treatment foster care programs and independent living programs, primarily serving the foster care population as well as a juvenile services population.

If passed, House Bill 377 would address the ongoing need for funding important therapeutic childcare programs. These programs would offer grants to providers that specialize in providing childcare and early childhood education children under the age of 6, who have developmental delays, physical disabilities, or delays in social, emotional, or behavioral functioning. While there are initial cost associated with the therapeutic childcare grand programs, addressing the mental and behavioral needs of the children can lead to long-term cost savings. Early intervention can prevent more significant issues that may require costly services in the future, such as intensive mental health treatment.

Preparing Maryland for a prosperous future begins with recognizing that our youngest residents must get what they need today to become the adults who will strengthen our communities and build our economy. Fortunately, what our youth need is not a mystery. Recent advances in the science of early childhood development tell us that the early years are a time when the brain is literally building itself from the ground up, in much the way a house is constructed. And, it is the relationships and experiences children have early in life that are the building blocks for the skills they need to remain healthy, and to succeed in school, in relationships, and in the workforce.

Funding the therapeutic childcare grant program will provide the much-needed protection of vulnerable children. The therapeutic childcare grant program will also serve as an investment in their well-being, helping to break the cycle of trauma, promoting healthy development, and ultimately contributing to the creation of a more resilient and productive society. Unfortunately, antiquated funding streams require some families to surrender physical



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custody of their children to the Department of Human Services in order for the youth to access treatment in a Residential Treatment Center and other such programs.

This bill will help save the lives of children in our state and will help to keep families together. **It is for these reasons we politely ask for a favorable report on House Bill 377.**

For more information call or email:

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