



January 29, 2025

## Testimony Regarding House Bill 0185 – Therapeutic Child Care Program Funding Alterations

The Montgomery County [Children's Opportunity Alliance](#) is a locally legislated Early Care and Education Coordinating Entity that brings community together to create a more equitable, accessible, high-quality, and sustainable early childhood system that narrows disparities and puts young children on a path to reach their greatest potential.

**We urge you to support HB185** – Therapeutic Child Care Program Funding Alterations. The Therapeutic Child Care Grant Program is a critical piece of the early childhood system in our state, improving access for children who need high quality early care and education the most.

The Therapeutic Child Care Program provides the necessary funding to support medical services to young children with a medical diagnosis at an early care and education program. Without this medical care, these children would otherwise not be able to attend and receive early education services. Thanks to advancements in brain science, we know that 90% of brain development occurs before the age of five, and thus investing in young children's education before they reach Kindergarten produces a return on investment through High School and beyond.

There has been an increase in the prevalence of children with diagnosed developmental disabilities since 2019, according to the National Center for Health Statistics. In Montgomery County, we consistently hear from parents with young children who have special needs that they need to drop out of the workforce to care for their children, as they are unable to find an early care and education program that can accommodate their child. The Arc Montgomery County Karasik Family, Infant & Child Care Center, even as a recipient of this funding, was forced to close their waitlist for infants in August of 2024 after it reached 34 infants – which would have taken 2.5 years to enroll all of these students, giving false hope to the families at the bottom of the list.

Knowing that the Therapeutic Child Care Grant Program was stable and sustainable would go a long way in easing the burden that these providers are already carrying. By addressing the opportunity gap that currently exists for young children with disabilities and medical fragilities, we can create a more equitable early childhood system that will have lasting intergenerational benefits.

Submitted on behalf of the Children's Opportunity Alliance.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laura Jahromi".

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