

January 27, 2025

Dear Chair Atterbeary and the Ways and Means Committee,

My name is Dylan Rosenthal, I am the parent of a child with Down syndrome and am submitting this testimony in support of HB0185 Therapeutic Child Care Grant Program - Funding - Alterations. My son Desmond is currently enrolled at the Karasik Family, Infant and Child Care Center (KFICCC) in Montgomery County, which receives The Therapeutic Child Care Program Grant. As you know, this grant is designed to provide medical based, child centered early education. While this is important for all children, it is even more critical for those like Desmond.

Desmond is 3.5-years-old and has been at KFICCC since he was 6 months. While he is healthy now, Desmond was born with duodenal atresia (a blockage in his small intestine), although we didn't know it at first. We took him to the ER after he couldn't keep any milk down at 9 days old. An overnight of tests revealed the diagnosis, and after emergency surgery, Desmond recovered in the NICU for 16 days.

The blockage, surgery, and recovery set Desmond back quite a bit in his feeding, weight gain and development. For months we juggled appointments with his pediatrician and multiple specialists as well as multiple therapists. Fortunately, when we were ready to place Desmond in childcare, we found that we had a special child care center only a mile away from our house (KFICCC).

KFICCC has been a blessing to Desmond and our family. The on-site nursing staff gave us peace of mind and provided excellent care for Desmond's special needs. Some of his teachers already had experience teaching children with Down syndrome, and due to their partnership with MCPS Infants & Toddlers, his PT, OT, speech therapist, and special educator were able to see him there. This not only provided his teachers with support on how best to meet Desmond's developmental needs, but also limited the disruption to my wife's and my work schedules. KFICCC had a gait trainer that allowed Desmond to practice walking and move around with his peers when he was the only one in his class not yet walking independently. They have been wonderful at including him, adapting to his developmental delays, and contributing to his education and development.

While there are plenty of other childcare options, we are confident that KFICCC has been the right choice for Desmond and our family. It's hard to imagine he would have thrived like he has at another place without a nursing staff, teachers with special training, and a willingness to work with his Infants & Toddlers therapists and special educator. On top of all that, grants have allowed KFICCC to keep their tuition rates reasonable and affordable for our family.

I would like to end this testimony by thanking Delegates Mireku-North, Atterbeary, Foley, Kaufman, Miller, Solomon, Terrasa, and Vogel for their support of this legislation. Without the Therapeutic Child Care Program Grant, Desmond and my family would face significant

hardship. Please remember Desmond's story and approve HB185 on behalf of our family and others who have children with special needs.

Sincerely,

Dylan Rosenthal
Silver Spring, MD