



March 17, 2025

To: The Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
From: The Lourie Center for Children's Social and Emotional Wellness
Re: HB 185/SB 359 Therapeutic Child Care Grant Program - Funding – Alterations

POSITION: SUPPORT

Good afternoon, Chairman and Committee Members, and thank you for the opportunity to come before you in strong support of this important Therapeutic Childcare legislation. Special thanks to Delegate Bernice Mireku-North and Senator King for their leadership and championing of some of our most vulnerable and youngest children.

My name is Dr. Anna Curtin, licensed psychologist, and director of the Therapeutic Nursery Program (TNP). I first came to The Lourie Center as a student extern in my doctoral program and was captivated by the Therapeutic Nursery Program. TNP is such as special therapeutic service, in which the clinical and educational staff are able to work with students throughout the day in building coping skills, de-escalating children, all while teaching them kindergarten readiness skills. I returned to The Lourie Center when I graduated my program at Gallaudet University and have worked there for 10 years, both doing therapy with children and families as well as acting as leadership in the TNP.

I am writing to ask for your help to ensure there is appropriate funding for the Therapeutic Child Care Program (Reference R00A02.57 in the Budget Book). The Governor's Appropriation for this grant program for FY26 is short by 2.2 million dollars; The proposed appropriation is 1.5 million instead of the 3.7 million that providers have relied on for years and which is required to sustain this important service for families across the state who have children with complex healthcare needs.

This critical program allows children to receive the early intervention services they need to stay healthy and build skills and ensures parents of medically complex children are able to continue to work, knowing their children are receiving their childcare in a safe, quality, therapeutic environment. I can share a few of the stories of how we have helped children through this program. We have a student now enrolled who was left alone in her playpen for hours a day and who barely knew how to play with others or speak. After a year in TNP she is now thriving, chatty, and reading at 1st grade level despite only being 4 years old. We have had parents tell us that they could not go out to the store for fear of their child's explosive behaviors. One mother shared a recent Parent Teacher Conference that they could now take their child to church or to Target without any worries of what might happen. Even more importantly, this mother shared she was able to stop taking her anti-depressants because she was no longer so isolated due to the challenges with her child.

Early intervention programs save the State and County money in the long term. TNP works to prevent school failure in kindergarten and reduce long term costs to the state for special education services. The majority of the TNP families earn low income and are not able to access the services offered through TNP on their own or through private placements. It is also notable that without early intervention in preschool, TNP students are 25% more



likely to drop out of high school, 40% more likely to become a teen parent, and 70% more likely to be arrested for a violent crime (Hau et. al. 2018). There is both a societal cost and a true financial cost to this. Untreated trauma and high ACES scores can cost up to \$88,000 per adult annual – up to \$2.4 million dollars from state and federal supports over their lifetime.

Funding through FY25 has been 3.7 million each year and is shared by 7 therapeutic childcare providers statewide. The childcare providers use their grants to hire nurses and additional healthcare workers to supplement their existing childcare staff team. With this cut in funding these programs will likely not survive. If they do survive, they will most likely have to cut therapeutic childcare services to many children with a lower funded grant; costs for healthcare professionals and supplies are only going up, and these programs do not have other funding sources to fill in the gaps this shortfall would create.

There are bills this session (HB 185/SB 359) which were intended to extend funding for this program for the future. The Senate version of the bill as passed would pick up funding in FY27, continuing to FY29 at 3.7 million per year. The House version of the bill as amended in Friday would reduce the appropriation for FY27-29 to only 1.5 million. We ask for your help to restore 2.2 Million to the Therapeutic Child Care Grant Program (R00A02.57) to the FY26 budget AND conform the House Bill 185 to the same language/posture as Senate Bill 359, to ensure the appropriation of 3.7 million will be in place for the Therapeutic Child Care Grant Program from FY27-29.

Please let me know if there is any additional information I can provide to support this critical request.

Thanks and all best wishes,



Licensed Psychologist
Director, Therapeutic Nursery Program

