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Budget and Taxation Committee

Chair

Education, Business, and
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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SPONSOR STATEMENT

Senate Bill 359 – Therapeutic Child Care Grant

March 19, 2025

Madame Chair and Members of the Ways and Means Committee:

Therapeutic Child Care Programs are licensed, integrated mental health and education programs for families with high-risk children from birth to five. These children show significant delays in social and emotional development. Many have experienced trauma in their life, and many have been removed from typical mainstream preschool/daycares due to safety concerns or behavioral issues. Many of these children are medically fragile, with medical needs that cannot be addressed in conventional daycare or preschool setting.

There are several Therapeutic Child Care Programs in the State. They include:

- The Arc of Maryland
- Kennedy Krieger Institute
- Kennedy Krieger PACT – Helping Children with Special Needs
- The Lourie Center for Children’s Social and Emotional Wellness

Therapeutic Child Care Programs partner with parents/caregivers to effectively support the development of the child and the family as a whole. Therapeutic Child Care Centers can also offer specialized child care; for example, services for children who are experiencing homelessness or housing uncertainty. And services for medically fragile children.

Therapeutic Child Care Programs have an over 80% success rate of transitioning children to a typical kindergarten and maintaining typical education placement and social-emotional gains through 2nd grade. This success rate results in millions of dollars of savings to the state and counties by reducing long-term intensive special education expenditures.

During the 2022 legislative session, legislation was passed that defined Therapeutic Child Care Programs and set dedicated funding for those programs for two fiscal years. Senate Bill 359 will maintain that dedicated funding.

Interventions at younger ages have a huge potential to alter a child’s future developmental trajectory. The benefits from these early learning programs are substantial and need to be protected and so I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 359.