

My name is Christina Ritchie, I am the parent of a child with a developmental delay and am submitting this testimony in support of HB0185 Therapeutic Child Care Grant Program - Funding - Alterations. My son is currently enrolled and my daughter Rebecca has "graduated" from 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 Rebecca.

When Rebecca was born, she was in a lot of distress and she was immediately placed on a cooling bed in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit to protect her brain from frequent seizures that began within an hour of her birth. I was not able to hold her in my arms until she was five days old. Her condition had stabilized, but she was left with stress on her brain. Her doctors could not tell us what her prognosis would be, but we were told to watch out for developmental delays. We also did not know whether her seizures would recur. What we did know was the early intervention was her best chance for success.

When it was time for me to return to work, our primary concern was finding a child care provider that could support the early interventions that Rebecca needed and could be prepared for unknown future neurological symptoms. KFICCC was the only provider in a reasonable distance from our home that my husband and I could actually afford. Their close integration with Infants and Toddlers made it possible not only for us to be present for Rebecca's physical therapy but also gave us real assurance that her teachers were well prepared to support her progress. Moreover, having a nurse on staff at KFICCC reassured our neurologist that any changes in her physical condition could be handled immediately and well.

Rebecca thrived at KFICCC. With the support of the professional staff there, her developmental pediatrician determined she was "caught up" when she was two. Her seizures thankfully had not recurred. Today, she is a first grader who entered elementary school healthy, safe and developmentally ready thanks to the early interventions she received at KFICCC.

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, Rebecca and my family would have faced significant hardship. There are so many other children just like Rebecca. Please remember her story and approve HB185.

Thank you.