



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.

I am Dr. Jimmy Venza, licensed psychologist, and Executive Director of the Lourie Center for Children's Social and Emotional Wellness in Rockville. The Lourie Center has been my work home for more than twenty years and the Center is one of our nation's homes for infant and early childhood mental health care. We are also part of Maryland's fabric of specialized early childhood care, along with two other nationally recognized institutions: Kennedy Krieger and the Arc.

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.

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.

These programs have been around for decades and make a difference in the lives of children and their families for providing early therapeutic intervention, which we know is an investment to reduce future needs and costs.



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,

Jimmy Venza, Ph.D.

Licensed Psychologist

Executive Director

