



DATE: February 5, 2021 **COMMITTEE:** House Ways and Means
BILL NO: House Bill 608
BILL TITLE: Early Childhood Education - Child Care Provider Support Grant Program (The Child Care Provider Support Act)
POSITION: Support

PACT: Helping Children with Special Needs, an affiliate of the Kennedy Krieger Institute, supports House Bill 608.

Bill Summary:

House Bill 608 establishes the Child Care Provider Support Grant Program within the Maryland Department of Commerce, in consultation with the Maryland State Department of Education. This bill intended to offset the financial loss from the pandemic.

Background:

PACT: Helping Children with Special Needs, Inc. operates the **only child care centers in the Baltimore Metropolitan area for young children who are medically fragile and infants and toddlers who are homeless.**

World of Care (WOC) Medical Child Care

- Only child care center in the Baltimore Metropolitan area for young children (ages birth to five) needing daily nursing care and specialized equipment not available in typical child care centers, i.e. children with:
 - Heart and breathing problems requiring monitors and oxygen
 - Eating disorders requiring nourishment through feeding tubes
 - Severe seizure disorders
 - Organ transplants and other serious surgeries
 - Juvenile Type I diabetes
- Comprehensive services include daily skilled nursing care/interventions, occupational, physical and speech therapy
- Pre-COVID-19, WOC served about 54 children full time
- Currently, during the pandemic, WOC is able to serve approximately 37 children, many of whom are being served on a part-time basis
 - Because of the special needs of these 37 children, the staffing is similar to that typically needed for pre-COVID-19 census for the child care center

Therapeutic Nursery (TN) for Homeless Infants and Toddlers

- Only Early Head Start/child care center in Baltimore City providing specialized attachment-based, trauma-informed care and education for infants and toddlers whose families are currently living in homeless shelters or transitioning back to the community
- Mental health services for parents using research-based interventions
- Pre-COVID-19, TN served 24 children at any given time
- Currently, during the pandemic, TN is serving children virtually with no on site services



Rationale:

PACT's goal is to serve all children in need, regardless of family income. While PACT receives government, foundation and corporate grants, as well as donations from generous private donors, our funding does not cover the actual cost of providing the complex array of services our children and families require. Additionally, our programs need sustained state funding that reflects annual cost-of-living adjustments to be able to achieve comparable wages for pre-k programs across the State.

Like many child care providers throughout the State, PACT has been deeply impacted by COVID. Because of the specialized services needed by our children, nursing, therapy services, medical supplies, administration of special procedures, medical and specially trained staffing has not changed even with the reduction in children. Since the onset in the spring of 2020, PACT has experienced increased expenses for PPE, including masks for adults and children, gloves and cleaning materials. We've also experienced increased costs for staffing, as we need more people to keep classrooms completely separated and for extra cleaning, getting children to/from parents and daily health screenings. We've also had to account for a significant rise in the time and cost of onsite janitorial services to ensure our space is sanitized for both our students and teachers. Our revenues, already challenged prior to the pandemic, have decreased as we must reduce class size to keep our children safe.

Our children have health vulnerabilities and are more susceptible to community illnesses and severe outcomes from illness. Due to the complexity of their needs, parents are extremely limited on where they can send their children. Our programs fulfill the need for safe childcare, and more, by providing a comprehensive environment where a child can receive specialized services. Without supportive funding, our programs are at tremendous risk of closure. We cannot afford to lose this resource for our children.

PACT: Helping Children with Special Needs requests a favorable report on House Bill 608.

PACT: Helping Children with Special Needs, Inc. is an independent affiliate of Kennedy Krieger Institute. PACT retains its own 501(c) (3) status, a separate board of directors and is responsible for securing funds for its programs. Our mission is to promote the development of young children with special needs and their families.