



Kennedy Krieger Institute

Bradley L. Schlaggar, MD, PhD

President and CEO

Zanvyl Krieger Faculty Endowed Chair

*A comprehensive resource
for children with disabilities*

March 27, 2024

The Honorable Vanessa Atterbeary
Chair, House Ways and Means Committee
Room 131 House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Letter of Support on Senate Bill 419 - Therapeutic Child Care Grant Program - Funding - Alterations

Dear Chair Atterbeary,

Kennedy Krieger Institute is deeply grateful to both the Senate and House bill sponsors for introducing legislation to support the Therapeutic Child Care Grant Program. This legislation is critical in ensuring that funding remains available for early education providers of our most fragile children. We are especially excited that the Senate has passed the bill and hope for the Way and Means Committee's thoughtful consideration and movement, as well.

Families and caregivers for children with complex medical needs have very few resources for integrated medically supported early childhood education. We believe it is part of our mission to serve children and their families through a stimulating MSDE (Maryland State Department of Education) accredited (five-star Maryland EXCELS rating) integrated childhood education center. As you are aware, Kennedy Krieger is home to four early childhood education programs, three that receive annual grants from these funds including:

- Parents and Children Together (PACT); Helping Children with Disabilities Therapeutic Nursery (Southeast Early Head Start)
- Parents and Children Together (PACT); World of Care
- Center for Autism and Related Disorders (CARD); Inclusive Pre-K (Center for Autism Services, Science and Innovation (CASSI) at Kennedy Krieger Institute)

These programs are built on an inclusion model – bringing together typically developing children with those who are neurodiverse or have medical needs to learn together in a safe and supportive environment.

By extending the funding for fiscal years through 2028, this legislation creates a level of sustainability for early childhood providers of medically fragile children. It should be noted, however, that supplemental funding sources, i.e., government, foundation, and corporate grants, as well as donations from private philanthropy, continue to be needed to cover program costs.

Lack of access to inclusive early learning is one of the most cited reasons for family stress, and disruptions in provision of care reduce the efficacy of critical early intervention afforded during these formative years. At the same time, research has shown long-lasting benefits for children with and without developmental differences to learn, grow, and play side-by-side. That is why Kennedy Krieger has made a firm commitment to including more typically developing peers within our early childhood programs.

We deeply appreciate the efforts of the Committee to engage in identifying and implementing needed solutions.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bradley L. Schlaggar". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bradley L. Schlaggar, MD, PhD
President and CEO

¹Smith, L.K. et al., (February, 2023). Building bipartisan support for child care toolkit: 2023 update. Bipartisan Policy Center: <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/download/?file=/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/BPC-ECI-Bipartisan-Toolkit-2023-Update-Full-Report.pdf>