FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NYS BUDGET FAILS TO SHORTEN WAIT TIMES FOR CHILDREN WITH DELAYS AND DISABILITIES

The Kids Can't Wait NYS Campaign is deeply disappointed that the final SFY23 New York State budget does not include language establishing an 11% increase in Early Intervention rates. As parents, providers, early childhood professionals and advocates, we have worked to ensure timely access to Early Intervention services for infants and toddlers with developmental delays and disabilities. Without a rate increase, the chronic shortage of providers will continue, leaving children across New York waiting for services, unable to access the timely services they need and are entitled to by law.

New York has a legal and moral obligation to provide timely and comprehensive services to young children with developmental delays and disabilities. State government's failure to increase reimbursement rates for speech, occupational and physical therapists and other Early Intervention providers means children will continue to face long wait times for services. The impact will be greatest for children of color who already are less likely to be referred at a young age or to have services initiated within the legally required timeframe. Every week and every month waiting means children are losing out on opportunities to develop to their full potential.

The state still has an opportunity to raise rates this fiscal year, outside of the budget that has been passed by the legislature. The Division of Budget, which operates under the oversight of the Office of the Governor, can increase the Early Intervention rate within the rate-setting process that follows legislative adoption of the budget. **We call on Governor Hochul to approve the 11% rate increase through the rate-setting process.**

In December 2021, the Governor signed into law a $40 million Covered Lives assessment, requiring private health insurance companies to contribute more to the cost of Early Intervention. The State should use this additional revenue to help pay for the increase—not merely to save the State money at a time when young children are waiting for the services they need. This rate increase is also necessary to bring parity between the Early Intervention system and the Preschool Special Education system, which is anticipating an 11% rate increase committed to by Governor Hochul. By undercutting opportunities for children under the age of three, the State is putting children even further behind by the time they enter preschool, and in some cases permanently harming their developmental trajectory.

We are grateful for the support of legislative champions who pressed for a rate increase as a practical solution to chronic provider shortages. We ask them to continue working with us to secure a sufficient rate increase. Given the importance of intervening early, kids can't wait for services.

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