December 14, 2023

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Executive Chamber
New York State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

RE: Investing in Early Intervention

Dear Governor Hochul,

When parents have concerns about their infants’ or toddlers’ developmental progress, New York’s Early Intervention program should be there to help. Unfortunately, for thousands of families that help is not available because New York State is not adequately investing in this critical program.

We strongly urge you to include the following in your Executive Budget proposals:

- An 11% increase in reimbursement rates for all Early Intervention services delivered in person.
- A comprehensive assessment of the methodology used to determine payment for all Early Intervention evaluations, services and service coordination, with a commitment to publish a report within 12 months that includes a plan to revise rates so that the program can attract and retain providers sufficient to meet the needs of all eligible families.
- A student loan forgiveness program for new Early Intervention providers who are willing to provide in-person services in Medically Underserved (MUA) and/or Health Care Provider Shortage Areas (HPSAs).

Across the state, infants and toddlers with developmental delays or disabilities are waiting weeks and months for their Early Intervention services to begin, meaning that more children are languishing or regressing instead of making developmental gains. Children are waiting because therapists and providers who work one-on-one with families to nurture progress are leaving the Early Intervention program due to state-set payment rates that result in compensation that is far below what their peers earn doing equivalent work in other settings, such as schools or hospitals. Some Early Intervention provider rates are lower now than they were in the 1990s. If rates had kept pace with inflation, provider reimbursement rates would be 90%-140% higher than they are currently.

About 60,000 infants and toddlers qualify for Early Intervention services in New York State every year. Because 85% of brain development happens during the first three years of life, interventions like speech, occupational and physical therapies create positive changes that can have a lifelong impact on a child’s health and success in school and beyond.

Yet, nearly half of families whose children are evaluated and deemed eligible for Early Intervention services don’t receive them within the legally required timelines. The New York State Dept. of Health and the state Office of the Comptroller released data showing that wait times are longer for Black and
Hispanic children and that this crisis is hitting rural and high-poverty areas of our state especially hard. A recent concerning trend is that some families are offered only services delivered via telehealth, even when everyone agrees that the child requires services delivered in person in order to make progress. The mode of service delivery should be based on family choice and what is best for the child, not provider availability.

Thank you for your consideration. We hope to see more investments in Early Intervention in your 2024 Executive Budget.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Children of New York
Citizens' Committee for Children of New York
Liftoff Western New York
Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy
The Children's Agenda

1199SEIU
Alliance for Quality Education
Buffalo Hearing & Speech Center
Cerebral Palsy Associations of New York State
Erie County Dept of Health Special Needs Division
SUNY, Buffalo State University
The Children's Guild Foundation
The Education Trust—NY
United Way of Buffalo & Erie County

Ability Builders for Children, LLC
Access Therapy Group
Achieve Beyond dba Bilinguals Inc
ACTS
Adirondack Foundation/Adirondack Birth to Three Alliance
Alfred Montessori School
All About Kids
All Good Consulting
Allied Medic
Alternatives for Children
Ardent Solutions
Autism Early Enrichment Services LLC
Autism ProHelp
Ayla Services, Corp.
B & Y Kids
Beatrice Sarah Ajaero
Best Friends Services inc.
Big Minds, Tiny Hands LLC
Bornhava Specialized Early Childhood Center of WNY
Bornhava Specialized Preschool
Bright Start
Cooper Kids
Building Blocks For Tomorrow Inc.
Catracho' Barbershop
Challenge Early Intervention Center
CHDFS, INC.
Children’s Circle Inc.
Children's Speech and Rehabilitation Therapy
Competent Care
Countryside Childcare
Creative Therapies of WNY
Creative Wonders Therapy LLC
David A. Howe Public Library
Designing Futures Inc
Donnice Jackson
Dora Sourelos MAPTPC
Down Syndrome Parents Group of WNY
E. Sholom Inc.
Early Achievers, Inc.
Early Childhood Associates
Early Start Inc
EL NIDO
Emilia's Kids
Family of Kidz
First Choice Early intervention
For All God's Children, Inc.
Frederique Housshol
Frontier Central School District
General Pediatrics Service Line of Cohen Children’s Medical Center-
Northwell Health
Genius Therapy
Glitzy Sprinkle
Growing Up Physical Therapy PC
Health Home Serving Children Program of Northwell Health
Healthi Kids Coalition
Healthy Families Allegany Cattaraugus
Hear NY Audiology PC
Hillside Children's Center
HTA of NY
Ilaine Wissing, MS, OT/L
Important Steps
Intervention Temprana
Jennifer Simmons PT
Jones Memorial Hospital
OUR CHILDREN FIRST INC
Parent Education Program, Inc.
Parent Network of WNY
Parents Helping Parents Coalition of Monroe County
Pittsford Pediatric Associates, LLP
PlayDates Therapy Center
Positive Horizons Speech Consulting Services
Prime Kids Inc.
Prospect Kids LLC
ProviderSoft
PUSH for Empowered Pregnancy
Rachel Coyle, PT, MSPT
Rainbow Tots LLC
Right Start Development LLC
Rochester Hearing and Speech Center
Roots2Grow
Rosario G. Gould LLC
Rosemary Friel SLP PLLC
Sarah Rudney Leiva, MS, OTR/L
Shalom
Sound Speech and Language Pathology, P.C.
Spectrum Specialist, LLC
Speech & Feeding Therapy P. C.
SPLC
Starbridge Services Inc
Step Up Therapy Services, PLLC
Sunny Days Consulting - Middletown
Sunny Days Early Childhood Developmental Services, Inc.
Susan H Wolman LLC
Teach Alexander Educational Services Inc.
The Child Center of NY
The Inspired Community Project
The Therapy SP-OT, LLC
TheraCare
Therapeutic Hands
Therapists 2 Go
Therapy and Learning Center, Inc.
THERATOTS
Thrive by 5
TogetherNow
Tompkins County Whole Health
Tonya's Speech Wonders SLP, P.C.
Up Wee Grow
Vicky's Kids
Whole Child Developmental Group, LLC
Williamsburg Infant and Early Childhood Development Center
Yeled V’Yalda Early Childhood Center, Inc
Yeva Aminova MS-CCC-SLP
Young Minds @ Play

CC:
Angela Profeta
Blake Washington
Priya Joshi
Kim Hill
Maria Fernandez
James McDonald
Johanne Morne
Amir Bassiri
Priya Joshi
Kim Hill
Maria Fernandez
Speaker Heastie
Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins
Senator Gustavo Rivera
Assemblymember Amy Paulin
Senator Shelley Mayer
Assemblymember Michael Benedetto
Assemblymember Michaelle Solages
Senator Samra Brouk
Senator John Mannion
Assemblymember Jen Lunsford
Assemblymember Rebecca Seawright
Assemblymember Andrew Hevesi
Senator Jabari Brisport