



THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

February 8, 2022

The Honorable Carl Heastie, Speaker
New York State Assembly
Room 932, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12248

Re: Rate Increase for the Early Intervention Program

Dear Speaker Heastie:

We write to respectfully ask for an 11% reimbursement rate increase for the Early Intervention (EI) Program.

The EI Program has received virtually no rate increases in nearly two decades, with the exception of a small increase to a limited segment of the provider community in 2019. EI provider responsibilities have increased dramatically in recent years, with no concomitant increase in their reimbursement.

About the only rate adjustment received by the EI program were cuts amounting to over 15% in 2009 and 2010. Those cuts were never restored. Out of all of the health, education and human services, EI is one of the very few not to receive any Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) or trend factor increases through the years.

Chapter 820 of the Laws of 2021 established a \$40 million EI services pool which is to be used to reimburse the State and counties for costs associated with the EI program. This law will save the State \$15.4M this year and counties will save a similar amount this year. Those savings need to be re-invested back into the EI Program to help underwrite an 11% reimbursement rate increase for agency providers and therapists.

Therapists have been leaving the EI Program at alarming rates for other health or education service jobs, where they can receive adequate compensation for their work. In the past two years, the EI program has lost nearly 2,200 therapists.

An 11% reimbursement rate increase is identical to the percentage rate increase that the Governor has promised to providers of preschool special education programs. The children who are served by these programs have nearly the same service needs as children in the EI program. In fact, many of these children have just aged out of EI. Furthermore, the service providers and therapists in both programs are also mostly the same with very similar professional

qualifications. There is no legitimate reason to not have parity in rate increases between the two programs.

We have an opportunity to put the EI Program on a more stable financial footing for the future and to stop the exodus of therapists. If EI does not reasonably keep pace with other similar service venues, the migration of providers will simply continue to accelerate, adding to what already is a capacity crisis in the program. An 11% reimbursement rate increase can be accomplished by re-investing the EI savings brought by last year's new law.

With your support, we can demonstrate our commitment to the 70,000 toddlers and their families who critically need access to quality services. This is a much-needed investment in these children's development and in their futures.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

DRAFT