SUPPORTS

A.283-A/S.1222-A (Paulin/Rivera)

AN ACT to amend the public health law, in relation to a review and recommendations of reimbursement adequacy and other matters relating to Early Intervention

The New York State Association of County Health Officials, (NYSACHO), supports the above-referenced legislation which would examine the current reimbursement rates for providers of Early Intervention (EI) services and create recommendations for next steps to address any issues that the assessment finds.

When the Early Intervention Program (EIP) was established in New York state in the 1990s, reimbursement rates were set according to the fiscal climate at that time. Since then, the cost of living has increased over 115%[1], yet the reimbursement rates for EI have not kept pace; rather, they have gone down 15%[2]. While there was an increase of 5% included in the FY2024 state budget[3], that increase has yet to go into effect. The 2024 increase additionally still leaves rates an average of 10% lower than they were when the program started.

Low reimbursement rates are one of the principal reasons cited by providers who leave the EIP program. Long-term provider shortages became more dire during and after the COVID-19 pandemic with increased competition for qualified personnel across the healthcare sector. As a result, EI eligible children too often wait for extended periods of time for services. In 2022, 28% of children who were deemed eligible for EI services experienced delays in service provision past the 30-day service delivery requirement, and 51% of eligible children did not receive all the services for which they were eligible[4].

This legislation would require the New York State Department of Health to reexamine the reimbursement rates to ensure they are adequate to maintain provider capacity necessary to provide timely delivery services to eligible children. Addressing barriers to provider capacity in the EIP is a pressing issue, and mandating this report to take place would be the first step towards addressing it. NYSACHO strongly supports this legislation and recommends that it be enacted into law.

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[1] Federal Bureau of Labor Statistics, *CPI Inflation Calculator*
[2] New York State Association of Counties, *Saving Early Intervention*, https://www.nysac.org/news/posts/saving-early-intervention/
[3] https://www.health.ny.gov/regulations/state_plans/status/non-inst/original/docs/os_2024-06-28_spa_24-52.pdf
[4] Office of the New York State Comptroller, *Department of Health: Oversight of the Early Intervention Program,* February 2023 https://www.osc.ny.gov/files/state-agencies/audits/pdf/sga-2023-21s25.pdf