



Kids Can't Wait campaign statement on Governor Hochul's signature on the Covered Lives bill (A5339/S5560A) and veto of the Preschool/School-age Special Education Parity bill (A8013/S6516A)

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As a statewide coalition dedicated to ensuring that young children with developmental delays and disabilities receive timely services, the Kids Can't Wait campaign thanks Governor Hochul for the steps she took last week to address long-standing needs in the Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education programs.

We commend the Governor for signing the Early Intervention Covered Lives bill (A5339/S5560A) last week. The legislation will ensure that private health insurance companies contribute more to the cost of the chronically underfunded Early Intervention (EI) program and will simplify billing processes. This additional funding should be reinvested in the EI program to provide more timely interventions to infants and toddlers at a time when they will have the most impact on developmental growth.

We also commend the Governor for committing to an 11% increase in funding for preschool special education and school-age classrooms serving children with significant disabilities. We are disappointed with her veto of A8013/S6516-A, which would have provided these programs with the same rate increase as school districts, but we view the proposed increase in funding as a substantial step forward for children in these programs.

Increased funding for Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education is a smart investment for New York. Interventions are more effective and less costly when provided early in life when a child's brain is growing rapidly. These services are guaranteed by the federal Individual with Disabilities Education Act for children ages 0 – 5 years with developmental delays or disabilities, but too often children are forced to wait for services due to lack of providers following years of underinvestment. Failure to provide timely services takes a toll on New York's children, families, and economy.

If re-invested in the EI program, the Covered Lives assessment could reverse a decades-long reduction in EI rates that has led to a shortage of providers and a growing number of children who are not receiving timely and effective therapies and support. Inadequate compensation has led many providers to leave the Early Intervention system. The pandemic has exacerbated this troubling trend.

While the Kids Can't Wait campaign celebrates the investments that have been made and promised, there is more work to be done. Governor Hochul and legislators must ensure that additional EI revenue be used to increase reimbursement rates to incentivize providers to join and remain in the EI system. We look forward to joining with Governor Hochul and all leaders who are committed to equity in education to ensure these investments are sustainable and meet the needs of all New York's children.

Kids Can't Wait Steering Committee:

Advocates for Children of New York
Liftoff WNY

Children's Defense Fund NY
Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy

Citizens Committee for Children
The Children's Agenda



*"Quality, timely developmental support is a moral imperative," said **Larry Marx, CEO of The Children's Agenda.** "Every child, no matter their abilities or where they live, should have the therapies and early education that prepare them for lifelong learning and success. New York has the resources and capacity to create an Early Intervention and preschool special education system that is a model for the nation. All we need is the will to do so."*

*"The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on infants, toddlers, and preschoolers with developmental delays and disabilities, exacerbating a shortage of providers and racial inequities in service delivery during what is a critical age. CCC applauds Governor Hochul for taking much-needed action to support these children." said **Jennifer March, Executive Director of Citizens' Committee for Children of New York, Inc.** "The signing of A.5339/S.5560A to create a Covered Lives assessment to generate revenue from insurance providers who reject Early Intervention claims, as well as the Governor's announcement of an 11% increase in funding for preschool special education programs, will help children and families across the state access crucial developmental services they need. We look forward to working with the administration to reinvest the revenue from Covered Lives to support young children, and to extend similar funding increases to Early Intervention providers."*

*"We want to thank Governor Hochul for the commitment she has made to young children with developmental delays and disabilities and their families," said **Kim Sweet, Executive Director of Advocates for Children of New York.** By signing the Early Intervention Covered Lives bill and authorizing an 11% increase in reimbursement rates to preschool special education programs, she has taken a significant step to help young children receive timely services at a time when these services can have the most impact."*

*"This is a tremendous victory for infants and toddlers with developmental delays and disabilities in Western NY and across the state. Reversing decades of disinvestment in key supports and services, such as Early Intervention, will have lasting and generational impacts," said **Rachel Bonsignore, Director of Liftoff WNY.** "Liftoff WNY commends Governor Hochul for committing to invest in early childhood development and recognizing the determination of families, providers, and leaders that have advocated for these critical supports and therapies for far too long."*

*"Early childhood is a period of great opportunity and risk; we need more investment in effective interventions and community connections, especially for families with young children," said **Kate Breslin, President and CEO of Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy.** "For children with a delay or disability, every minute counts and Early Intervention is key to making sure New York's children thrive. We appreciate the Governor's and legislature's attention to the need to strengthen Early Intervention in New York."*

*"The Children's Defense Fund – New York is grateful to Governor Hochul for signing S.5560-A (Reichlin-Melnick) /A.5339 (Paulin) into law," says **Kercena A. Dozier, Executive Director of the Children's Defense Fund – New York.** "By requiring that New York's commercial health insurers contribute their fair share of Early Intervention services, a 'Covered Lives' assessment will bring \$40 million of badly needed revenue into our State's Early Intervention system. This new law holds the potential to benefit countless infants and toddlers with developmental delays and disabilities who have struggled to access critical services they urgently need and are legally entitled to – particularly our Black and Brown children, whose disparate access to these services has only worsened during the pandemic. We applaud the Governor for her leadership in doing the right thing for New York's infants and toddlers with developmental delays and disabilities and thank Senator Reichlin-Melnick and Assemblymember Paulin for championing this vital legislation."*