



Liftoff WNY | E-News | February 2024

Kids Can't Wait Advocacy Day 2024



On Tuesday, February 13, Liftoff and members of the Kids Can't Wait Coalition headed to Albany for a full day of advocacy calling for additional support for NYS's Early Intervention Program. When asked about the day an attendee said, "It was wonderful to meet with so many people from many regions who care about EI families and providers as much as I

do”. This was the first year that WNY organized a bus to the Capital to uplift the voices of children with special needs and their families. Liftoff was joined by parents, early childhood professionals, pediatricians, therapists, and early intervention specialists.

Advocates shared their personal stories and deep expertise with WNY legislators, encouraging their support for Early Intervention in the NYS budget. Attendees met with Assemblywoman Peoples-Stokes, Assemblyman Rivera, Senator Ortt, Senator Gallivan and Senator Kennedy virtually. Senator Ortt even shared the meeting on his [social media platforms](#). (Pictured below, attendees during their meeting with Assemblywoman Peoples-Stokes).

Investment in early intervention is critical as years of low pay has led to experienced providers leading the Early Intervention program and recent graduates choosing to practice in other settings. With less providers in the field, this results in long waitlists and children missing out on life-changing services because there are not enough providers in NY to serve all families who qualify for help. This problem disproportionately impacts children of color, low-income children, and those living in rural or large urban areas.

The Kids Can't Wait Campaign is calling for an 11% reimbursement rate increase for EI services delivered in person. However, that increase alone is not enough. We hope that an increased rate and the establishment of a student loan forgiveness program will help stabilize the Early Intervention workforce allowing providers to give services to those children in need.

If you would like to join Liftoff and the Kids Can't Wait Campaign in urging legislators to push for an 11% increase, please sign the #TakeAction form below.

Support the Kids Can't Wait Coalition



Aligned Action Report: Empire State Child Care Campaign's Advocacy Day



Liftoff believes that every child care educator should be valued, respected, and fairly compensated. That's why we've adopted the [Empire State Campaign for Child Care's](#) 2024 statewide priorities – especially the establishment of permanent child care workforce compensation fund. This fund would ensure equitable pay for all members of the child care workforce employed in licensed or registered programs, mirroring salaries comparable to similar positions within the public school system. As parents struggle with long waiting lists and higher costs for care, investing directly in the child care workforce will allow passionate educators to stay in these jobs and help us build a pipeline for the future. To learn more about the Empire State Campaign's recent efforts in Albany, click the button below:



Partner Features



Liftoff extends our warmest congratulations to Blythe Merrill, Executive Vice President at the [Oishei Foundation](#) on her recent retirement announcement! As a founding member of Liftoff WNY, Blythe played an instrumental role in shaping our work and strategic focus. Serving on Liftoff's Steering Committee for eight years, Blythe's leadership has been pivotal in crafting our mission, vision, and core early childhood priorities. Her passion and tireless efforts have truly been an inspiration to us all. We wish Blythe a well-deserved retirement filled with joy, relaxation, and continued success. Thank you, Blythe!



Liftoff celebrates the [Early Childhood Development Coalition of Allegany County's](#) grand opening of their First Step Family Resource Center in Wellsville! Planning is well underway for classes and workshops for parents and caregivers focused on positive parenting, health, and child safety. The Family Resource Center is a program of Ardent Solutions, in collaboration with Coalition and funded in part by Liftoff WNY Network Alliance members the [Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield of Western New York Blue Fund](#). Congratulations on your recent ribbon-cutting and community celebration!



Liftoff WNY is a proud member of the Western New York Digital Equity Coalition. This coalition was created to focus on the digital inequity across the WNY region during long-term pandemic recovery efforts. To learn more about digital equity and more about the coalition, please find their [website here](#). To sign up for their newsletters, click the button below.

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