



Alliance for the Betterment of
Citizens with Disabilities

Empowering People: Providers Shaping Policies

Department of Health FY 2026 Budget Listening Session

October 24, 2024

Good day, Commissioner Baston, and members of the Department of Health. On behalf of ABCD, thank you for this opportunity to share our thoughts as you begin deliberations on the proposed FY '26 Budget. It means a lot to us to be a part of your process.

Thank you for the 3 recent increases in our rates. They are an important first step, but they alone will not solve a problem over 15 years in the making.

Undervaluing and underpricing Early Intervention over the last few decades has eroded our prestige and talent.

Specifically, it has

- Resulted in a workforce which continues to choose to work in hospitals, nursing homes and schools which, unlike EI, have been able to keep pace with wage growth.
- Resulted in untold numbers of infants and toddlers with developmental delays or disabilities who have missed a narrow window of opportunity to minimize and prevent barriers to their development, undermining their capacity to realize their full potential.
- Resulted in services that have been unavailable to numerous eligible, minority, low income, rural, urban and foster care children.¹
- Prevented a 300-800% combined rate of return from avoided costs in the already formidable public cost of the K-12 educational, Medicaid and Medicare systems, and from increased income taxes of adults who benefited from EI as children.²

¹ Prenatal to 3; Policy Impact Center. 2023. *Early Intervention Services*. <https://pn3policy.org/pn-3-state-policy-roadmap-2023/us/early-intervention/#:~:text=EI%20Services%20Can%20Save%20States,million%20depending%20on%20the%20state>

²Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. \$4-\$9 dollars in returns for every \$1 invested in early childhood programs. www.developingchild.harvard.edu

If we wish to go forward, stasis is not a solution. The state must commit at least as much time to building EI back up as it did to wearing it down.

Please consider providing an annualized cost of living increase of 2.5% for EI providers.