



Alliance for the Betterment of
Citizens with Disabilities

Empowering People: Providers Shaping Policies

Department of Health Fiscal Year 2028 Budget Listening Session

October 7, 2026

Testimonial by Cathy Chin, Executive Director

We continue to advocate for an annual COLA for Early Intervention providers. Despite its significance in the current reality, Federal HR1 will not end our vision or our subsequent actions for our future.

Rights and Access

Recent changes in federal priorities have introduced a tremendous amount of uncertainty in our community. The right for disabled adults to live, learn and work in their home and communities rather than segregated in institutions has been challenged by our own federal government and resulted in the removal of the community integration provisions of the HHS Section 504 rule. On top of the legal threats, the federal government has cut \$1 trillion from Medicaid in HR1. The roll back in funding could lead to across-the-board cuts impacting an entire system of community-based services that people with IDD and their families rely on. We will fight to preserve ADA's integration mandate, a right reinforced by the *Olmstead* decision, but we must not overlook the fact that access is a fundamental component of any right.

A year and a half ago we began the Defending the Achievement campaign, a series of monthly videos the goal of which was to maintain government investment in Early Intervention, HCBS, health care and safety net services by showing the impact of what we do.

We realized that it is easy to lose sight of the power we still possess and that to the people we serve and their families, people we employ, and New Jersey's taxpayers and citizens it is our responsibility to make what we do visible, because success is often invisible. Attached is the vimeo address to our Defending the Achievement campaign video, *Learning to Fall*.

In this video we hear from a speech therapist who works in a school for children with special needs in addition to providing early intervention services, telling us that 4 hours after her birth she had a prognosis that she would probably never walk, be independent, or achieve higher education. Early Intervention gave her the tools she and her family needed to overcome every single one of those early predictions to get her where she is today. Today she provides a model of hope and courage for her Early Intervention families asserting, "I've been where you are, and look at me today."

<https://vimeo.com/1174106658?fl=ip&fe=ec>

Our Early Intervention providers work to prevent and minimize permanent disability. This is a story of great ambition and repeated success.

A right without access is essentially meaningless. Maintaining a stable network is essential.

No cuts to Early Intervention provide rates. Please consider a COLA.