



TESTIMONY
2024 JOINT LEGISLATIVE BUDGET
HIGHER EDUCATION
February 8, 2024

Written testimony submitted by [Adirondack Birth to Three Alliance](#) at [Adirondack Foundation](#)

INTRODUCTION

The Adirondack Birth to Three Alliance at Adirondack Foundation appreciates the opportunity to submit written testimony to the 2024-25 Joint Budget Hearing on Higher Education.

Our written testimony is the collaborative work of our members reflecting the expertise and experience of early child care educators, family support providers, child care providers, regional child care resource and referral agencies, early intervention providers and agencies, businesses, municipalities and families. Founded in 2015, the Alliance connects a network of public and private sources that provide early childhood education, physical health, social-emotional development, and family support services, making it easier for providers and parents to find needed resources. We provide a needed forum for organizations and individuals committed to this work to share best practices, identify funding opportunities, and discuss and work together to solve common challenges. At the same time, our relationships across the region help us identify gaps, bridge services, and leverage community resources to improve early childhood education and services in our region.

The Adirondack Birth to Three Alliance at Adirondack Foundation appreciates the opportunity to share with you recommendations for improving services for children and families in the Adirondacks.

WORKFORCE INVESTMENTS & INCENTIVES

Workforce recruitment and retention across all disciplines, but especially education, child care and health care fields is challenging for employers in the Adirondack region. While not one policy will change the trend, we must ensure that any policy that provides loan forgiveness, scholarships or other incentives further encourages providers to live and work in the North Country. Our region faces compounding challenges, lack of housing, affordability of housing, lack of child care, and a vast geography. Adirondack Birth to Three Alliance encourage the Legislature to evaluate each program to ensure the Adirondack region is equitably represented.

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST LICENSURE

The Adirondack Birth to Three Alliance appreciates the proposal to extend the authorization of school psychologists to work in certain preschool programs for an additional two years.

Unfortunately, because school psychologists are not fully licensed, they continue to be excluded from other programs, such as early intervention, where they are greatly needed. In addition, there is a great and growing need for mental health services in our youth. Extending licensure to

school psychologists will enable them to provide services to children and families outside the school setting. We support eliminating barriers to accessing care by qualified practitioners. For decades, school psychologists have been a vital part of our school communities. We believe they can appropriately provide services within the larger community setting as well. We therefore encourage the Legislature to pass legislation to license school psychologists (S3036/A2033).

SPEECH LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY ASSISTANTS

The Adirondack Birth to Three Alliance supports the establishment of speech language pathology assistants. The need for speech language pathology services is increasing among all populations. Whether it is young children needing assistance acquiring language, stroke patients relearning skills, or elderly individuals seeking accommodations to support their health and well-being, speech language pathologists are in high demand.

Unfortunately, there are far too few speech language pathologists to meet this demand, especially in the North Country. According to NYS Education Department website, here are the number of licensed therapists, by county:

Clinton	Essex	Franklin	Hamilton	Warren
103	23	33	4	63

The services of a speech language pathologist range from serving mild language acquisition delays to resolving complex needs of stroke patients. The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association has long recognized that an assistant position within the profession would allow speech language pathologists to work at the top of the scope while under their supervision, allow educated and trained individuals to provide quality care and services. The thoughtful establishment of a speech language pathology assistant within the profession will improve access while ensuring quality of care. The Adirondack Birth to Three Alliance encourages the Legislature to consider the creation of speech language pathology assistants.

CLOSING

Adirondack Birth to Three Alliance appreciates the opportunity to share with you our communities' recommendations for improving services to children and families in the Adirondacks. We look forward to working with you during this legislative session.

For more information, please contact Kate Ryan, Director at Adirondack Birth to Three Alliance at Adirondack Foundation at kate.ryan@adkfoundation.org.