



TESTIMONY
2025-26 JOINT LEGISLATIVE BUDGET
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE
February 11, 2025

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

INTRODUCTION

The Adirondack Birth to Three Alliance at Adirondack Foundation (Alliance) appreciates the opportunity to submit written testimony to the 2025-26 Joint Budget Hearing on Health and Mental Hygiene.

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 centers, 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 services in our region.

The Adirondack Birth to Three Alliance at Adirondack Foundation appreciates the opportunity to share with you our perspective on the 2025-26 Executive budget and recommendations for improving services for children and families in the Adirondacks.

EARLY INTERVENTION 2024-25 RATES

5% Growth 2024-25: The Adirondack Birth to Three Alliance is disappointed that Governor Hochul failed to submit the State Plan Amendment (SPA) to the Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) authorizing the 5% increase in early intervention rates approved in last year's enacted budget until December 2024. This delay means that the increase will only be retroactive to October 1, 2024, rather than the promised April 1st 2024. Providers were told that the increase would be retroactive to April 1st and as such adjusted accordingly. Now, many providers in the Adirondacks will not be fully reimbursed between April 1st and October 1st of 2024. This irresponsible inaction further strains an already-fragile early intervention system.

Telehealth Rate Reductions: The Alliance is disappointed that Governor Hochul has requested a 10% reduction in telehealth early intervention services. It is without debate that the early intervention program is failing to meet its responsibilities to provide early intervention services to children ages 0-3 year old. **In Franklin and Hamilton counties, early intervention relies on telehealth providers as there is not a single in-person provider for either counties' early intervention programs. Families are not receiving services**

that their children need. Reducing telehealth rates at this time is not a smart policy. We do not have the capacity to change our geography. The Adirondacks are rural. In fact, they are ultra-rural. Reducing telehealth rates ignores the reality of our region.

4% Modifier for Rural and Underserved Areas: The 2024-25 enacted budget also approved a 4% increase for in-person services in rural and underserved areas. There is no place in New York State more rural than the Adirondacks. The Alliance is concerned that the State has not yet submitted a State Plan Amendment to Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services requesting approval for the 4% increase as it is expected to be extended to providers April 1, 2025. Considering the failure of the State to fully fund the 5% increase approved in 2024-25, the Alliance encourages the Legislature to work with Governor Hochul to ensure that the 4% increase is approved on time to impact the rates on April 1, 2025.

EARLY INTERVENTION 2025-26 RATES

The Alliance strongly encourages the Legislature to support a 5% increase in in-person early intervention rates effective April 1, 2025. We encourage the Legislature to ensure that there are no conditions placed on the approval of the 5% increase. In addition, we recommend that this increase is funded through the Covered Lives Assessment.

EARLY INTERVENTION PROFESSIONALS

The Alliance recommends the creation of a loan forgiveness and scholarship program for clinical professionals entering the early intervention system. There is an across-the-board shortage of occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech language pathologists, and other clinical professions. A loan forgiveness and scholarship program would help to encourage these highly educated professionals to work in the early intervention system.

EARLY INTERVENTION REFORM

To have a functioning early intervention program that meets the needs of children and families across the state, New York needs to conduct a comprehensive review of the program service-delivery model and financial structure. New York must re-imagine how to effectively and equitably provide high-quality early intervention services. The Alliance recommends that this work be supported by this year's enacted budget and begin without delay.

CLOSING

Adirondack Birth to Three Alliance at Adirondack Foundation 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.