

Hello my name Julia Day. I live in Saranac, NY, which is part of Clinton county.

I am writing you today as a parent advocate for EdTrust-New York and the Birth to Three Alliance.

I am here to speak in support of early intervention services and maternal and Infant health.

This legislation is important to me both on a personal and professional level. As a School Psychologist, I have worked in both school and preschool settings. I have entered homes to evaluate students for preschool aged special education services and I have witnessed first hand the lack of service providers in both the Early Intervention and preschool special education arenas. Within the last few years, I have also witnessed a decrease in the school readiness of our kindergarten aged students due to the lack of available early intervention services. This lack is particularly observable within the school district that I work and has a lasting educational and financial impact on children in our communities.

Within the last two years I have begun to navigate the early intervention process as a parent as well. At about six months of age, I noticed that my son wasn't meeting his developmental milestones. I personally advocated for him to have an evaluation, even when his pediatrician did not think it necessary. Following his evaluation, it was recommended that he receive both speech and physical therapy services. Thomas, my son, was 6 months old. Although a need was identified and he was legally entitled to receive services, no service providers were available. We paid out of pocket for him to receive physical therapy and he went without speech services until this last July. He was over a year old before early intervention service providers became available in our area.

I am grateful and fortunate to live in Clinton County, rather than my neighboring county just two miles away, as there are no in-person providers in my neighboring county. In rural upstate New York, reimbursement rates and the cost of travel make it difficult for counties to recruit and retain employees. The recent reimbursement rate hardly equates to the rates of inflation over the past 30 years, which is when the last rate was increased. The recent reimbursement platform and cut to the telehealth rates are an additional blow to what workforce was available for early intervention.

Thomas is now almost two. With the help of early intervention providers, he can now walk and is beginning to talk. He will continue to require early intervention services in order to develop his language acquisition and gross motor skills. I ask you to continue to invest in his development and the development of children like him by committing to increased funding for this state mandated program and for high quality maternal and pediatric health.

My personal story is mild in comparison to other families' experiences. I am very grateful to have been knowledgeable regarding early childhood development and the early intervention process, which. This knowledge helped me to identify the issue more quickly than typical families. My experience is similar to the statistics identified by the State Comptroller regarding racial disparities and early intervention identification and service acquisition. The study can be found here <https://www.osc.ny.gov/state-agencies/audits/2024/09/26/oversight-early-intervention-program-follow>. Programs such as Parent Child +, Healthy Families NY, and Nurse-Family Partnership support mothers and babies during the prenatal and early periods of development, often play a key role in helping identify delays in development at an earlier age. They also often support families in navigating the appropriate services. Please support programs like these so that all families have the opportunity to give their child everything that they need to be successful in school and throughout life.