

October 2018

Dear Governor Andrew Cuomo, NYS Education Commissioner MaryEllen Elia and NYS Health Commissioner Howard A. Zucker:

***Children can't wait.***

Many difficulties facing children can be prevented if they are addressed early in life. Young children showing a possible developmental delay, such as speech or motor issues, can enter school at their full potential, ready to learn and succeed, if they have timely access to professional services before age 6.

Services such as physical, occupational and speech therapy are increasingly not available in our state, leaving hundreds of children waiting too long and possibly losing their chance to overcome early delays.

In New York State, nearly one out of 5 infants and toddlers are forced onto waiting lists now – and that's growing. In Monroe County, one-third of children birth to three years old spent time on a waiting list to receive these critical early services in 2016.

Access to Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education programs are required by law once a child is identified as being in need. Because New York State reimbursement rates paid to providers are so low, there is a shortage of professionals available to work with these young children, and providers are closing down.

If left unserved, the children's long-term health and success will diminish. As a community we will lose their full contributions and we will spend millions of dollars on expensive special education services during their K-12 schooling.

**Please prioritize these vulnerable children by taking action to:**

- **Raise reimbursement rates for Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education services;**
- **Create equitable funding in the Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education systems that reflects the real cost of providing services.**

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Name (either print or signature is acceptable):

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Street Address:

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City/Town & Zip:

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Email address [Please print clearly]:

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*(exclusively for the purposes of being added to The Children's Agenda Advocacy Network. We will not share your email address with others.)*

*OPTIONAL: Add a personal comment below or on the other side*