

## **MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT**

S.5560-A Reichlin-Melnick/A.5339 Paulin

***An Act to amend the public health law and the insurance law to provide a system that streamlines the process by which funds are distributed to municipalities to finance Early Intervention programs through creation of a Covered Lives assessment on commercial insurance plans.***

New York's Early Intervention (EI) program provides evaluations and services for infants and toddlers with developmental delays and disabilities. Necessary services are identified by a team who produce an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). Research affirms the importance of identifying and addressing developmental delays as early in life as possible when services can have the greatest impact and are most cost-effective. The pandemic has disrupted EI services for families and for providers, and children and families are suffering for it.

*The Covered Lives assessment in the legislation would set a fee on state-regulated commercial health insurance plans to help pay for EI services.* EI has been underfunded for years because commercial insurances deny the vast majority of claims for services. The money would pay for an increase in EI provider rates, relieve plans of the administrative burden of processing claims, and relieve providers of the burden of filing claims.

*A Covered Lives assessment would bring millions in new revenue into the EI system that could increase reimbursement rates and reduce wait times for services.* While federal law requires EI services to be delivered in a timely manner, families across New York routinely face waitlists and delays for services. These delays are due to a shortage of service providers and therapists caused primarily by the low reimbursement rates offered to the professionals who provide EI services. Today's fees are lower than they were in the 1990. Reimbursement increases paid from new revenue would encourage providers to stay in the field and improve availability of services to children.

**For all these reasons, the Schuyler Center urges passage of this legislation.**