MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT

S. 1875 (Brouk)/A.4408 (Reyes)
AN ACT to amend the social services law, in relation to reimbursement for early and periodic screening, diagnosis and treatment

*The Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy urges policymakers to pass this legislation that would direct the NYS Department of Health to submit a Medicaid State Plan Amendment (SPA) allowing for additional reimbursement to schools for essential mental, behavioral, and physical health services.*

Since 1872, Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy has advanced policies that strengthen New York families and improve child well-being so all New York children have a fair opportunity to thrive. Access to health services, including needed mental health services, is important to child well-being. The Schuyler Center is a member of the Coalition for Healthy Students – New York, which has been working to raise awareness and support for school Medicaid expansion.

Currently in New York, only services delivered to students with handicapping conditions or those with Individualized Education Plans (IEP) can be reimbursed by Medicaid, but an opportunity exists to draw additional federal funds for school health services for all students enrolled in Medicaid. Since 2014, fifteen states, including Massachusetts, Florida, and California, have successfully expanded their school Medicaid programs using this mechanism. A Medicaid SPA is required to enable the State to access additional federal Medicaid funds to support and sustain health services that would reach students in need, right where they are.

COVID-19 and racial health inequities have amplified the need to leverage every available resource to enhance school health and ensure all students have access to mental health and health care services. Schools play a vital role in addressing the physical and mental health needs of their students. The need for sustainable, Medicaid-billable school health services has been compounded by the pandemic, which has caused a notable decrease in important health measures like mental health services and vision screenings that impact learning.

Increasing access to health services through on-going Medicaid support would complement and sustain the current one-time American Rescue Plan investment in school health and mental health services.

*For all these reasons, the Schuyler Center urges passage of this legislation to expand access to school-based health and behavioral health services.*