



The Education Trust–New York

Testimony for the Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Health & Medicaid February 28, 2023

[The Education Trust–New York](#) is a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to educational equity. We work to attain educational justice through research, policy, and advocacy that results in all students – especially those who are from low-income backgrounds or students of color – achieving at high levels from early childhood through college completion. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony for this hearing.

Ed Trust–NY coordinates the [Raising NY](#) coalition, a diverse statewide coalition of parent, early childhood, education, business, and health organizations dedicated to supporting the learning potential of all children, with a focus on improving long-term outcomes for infants and toddlers who are low-income, children of color, and other under-served groups. The health sector is a critical conduit of the wellness and health of infants and toddlers, and as such, a large focus of our agenda focuses on equitable and timely access to Early Intervention services, expanded continuous Medicaid coverage for mothers and children up to age 6, and increased access to home visiting programs.

The pandemic continues to deepen and exacerbate challenges that families face in accessing and receiving crucial services and programs that are known to support healthy outcomes and increased learning potential in young children. The first three years of life are an especially critical period of growth and brain development, a time when specialized therapies can make the most impact for children with developmental delays or disabilities. ¹ In 2021-2022, almost half (47%) of eligible infants and toddlers in New York State waited longer than the federally mandated 30-day maximum waiting period to receive services. ² According to a newly released audit report by NYS Comptroller DiNapoli, children of color were less likely to receive an evaluation or receive services within the critical 30-day window than White children. ³ During the first few years of life of rapid development, months matter and delays in receiving services can have impacts on the learning potential throughout a child's life, with concerning implications for children of color, who are waiting longer to receive services, if at all.

Governor Hochul took a great step forward in supporting maternal health by expanding Medicaid coverage for new mothers for a full year post-partum in the SFY2023 budget. This is a great first step, however it is critical that we expand the Medicaid continuous coverage to mothers and children up to age 6. Access to high-quality maternal health and pediatric primary care is crucial to supporting the health and wellness of mothers and their young children, particularly the health of Black mothers, who are **five** times more likely to die of a pregnancy-related cause than White women in New York State. ⁴

Evidence-based home visiting programs offer a critical connection for families to community-based resources related to maternal mental health, health care, child development and other supports. At a time when significant racial disparities around maternal and infant death are worsening, it is imperative that programs that provide support and resources to vulnerable families are fully funded.

We respectfully offer the following recommendations to fully support the health and well-being of all children and families in New York State:

- **Increase reimbursement rates for Early Intervention providers by 11%.** The Covered Lives bill, which was signed by Governor Hochul in late 2021, designates \$28 million in new revenue, yet the funds remain unused. Since 2019, nearly 2,000 early intervention therapists have left the field, and 65 early intervention agencies have closed. Reimbursement rates, which have not increased in almost 20 years when taking inflation into account, must be increased in order to stop this mass exodus of providers and increase the workforce capacity.⁵
- **Expand continuous Medicaid coverage for mothers and children up to age 6.** High-quality maternal health and pediatric primary care is crucial to supporting the health and wellness of mothers and their young children, particularly the health of Black mothers and infants, who are facing emergency levels of mortality and illness. A medical home for mothers and young children provides not only health care, but also maternal mental health screenings, child development screenings, and referrals to early intervention when needed, as well as other supports and resources that maximize the growth potential during the critical early years of brain development and healthy attachment development. Further, Medicaid is one of the most effective anti-poverty programs, reducing out-of-pocket expenses and protecting recipients from the overall financial burdens that are associated with lack of insurance.⁶
- **Increase funding for home visiting programs.** Evidence-based maternal and infant home visiting programs connect expectant and new parents with community-based resources and support that support the critical growth in the prenatal and postnatal periods of growth and attachment. Recent estimates determine that the current home visiting capacity is only able to serve 3% of all infants and toddlers in New York State.⁷ New York State must restore each \$200,000 line item from the SFY 2023 budget for Help Me Grow (funded by Docs for Tots) and Parent Child+, two evidence-based home visiting programs that connect with pediatric primary care and home-based child care programs, respectively.

The Education Trust–New York is committed to advocating for the health and well-being of all children and families. We are grateful for the opportunity to submit testimony and offer data-informed recommendations that can support the health and wellness of all young children and mothers, especially those who are most vulnerable and under-served.

Please feel free to contact me at Lkyriakou@edtrustny.org with any questions regarding this testimony. Thank you.

1 <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/inbrief-science-of>

[ecd/#:~:text=In%20the%20first%20few%20years,brain%20circuits%20become%20more%20efficient](https://www.health.ny.gov/community/infants_children/early_intervention/eicc/docs/2022-12-15_eicc_apr_ssiip_review.pdf)

2 https://www.health.ny.gov/community/infants_children/early_intervention/eicc/docs/2022-12-15_eicc_apr_ssiip_review.pdf

3 <https://www.osc.state.ny.us/files/state-agencies/audits/pdf/sga-2023-21s25.pdf>

4 https://www.health.ny.gov/community/adults/women/docs/maternal_mortality_review_2018.pdf

5 <https://thechildrensagenda.org/the-agenda/earlychildhood/kids-cant-wait/>

6 [Research Update: Medicaid Pulls Americans Out of Poverty, Updated Edition – Center For Children and Families \(georgetown.edu\)](#)

7 https://raisingnewyork.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/09/Home-Visiting_NYS-Datasheet.pdf