

Date: _____

Governor Deval Patrick
State House Room 360
Boston, Ma. 02133

Ron Benham
Director, Bureau of Family Health and Nutrition
250 Washington St.
Boston, Ma. 02108

RE: Testimony for DPH Public Hearing on the Commonwealth's 24th Year Grant Application Under Part C of IDEA - Proposed Eligibility and Parent Fee Changes to the Massachusetts Early Intervention Program

Dear Governor Patrick and Ron Benham, Director, Bureau of Family Health/ Nutrition:

My name is _____ and I am writing because I am extremely concerned about the drastic eligibility changes and massive parent fees you are currently proposing to the Massachusetts Early Intervention program.

- Discuss your role in early intervention and the impact that you have seen on the children and families that you work with.
- If you have worked in other venues, such as hospitals, clinics, school systems, etc., discuss your past experience and the benefits that you see providing services to the family and child through early intervention vs. your work as a clinician in these other settings.
- Discuss why as a clinician you feel that early intervention is so valuable.
- Discuss how you would feel as a clinician to have to discontinue services to children that you service if eligibility were increased to 40% and 50% in expressive language. How could you justify this to the family? How would you feel on an eligibility evaluation if the child clearly has a delay and the family wants and needs services and isn't eligible. What types of children may not qualify and miss the opportunity for services? (children on the autism spectrum, etc.)
- Discuss how you feel about increasing the family fees to 7x or more of what families are paying now. Would families be able to pay these fees? What other financial burdens are your families facing? What would happen to these children whose families could not afford the fees? What do you see occurring if they deferred services for their child until eligible for special education services? Would children fall through the cracks and not picked up until failing in kindergarten and beyond? Discuss the impact of not having early services on their potential and secondary social-emotional and/or behavioral implications. Discuss that the child will need a higher intensity of services if intervention is delayed until the child enters the school system.

Ending Summary:

- Request that eligibility for Early Intervention services maintain at 30% delay.
- Request that the financial burden not be passed on to families.
- Request that they work with the Massachusetts Early Intervention Consortium's plan to address the shortfall in a way that is more is more balanced and will minimize the impact on children and families.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sign name, program, and address