

## **SAVE ILLINOIS EARLY INTERVENTION: Action Steps for Families**

As you may know, Governor Rauner has proposed cutting \$23M from the state's Early Intervention budget. That means that children with developmental delays of less than 50% would no longer be eligible to receive services through the EI program.

Please help us fight the governor's proposal. Here's what you can do:

- 1. Email / fax / call your Illinois General Assembly Legislators to let them know you oppose these cuts!** Don't know who your rep is? You can look it up online through the state's board of elections site: <http://www.elections.il.gov/districtlocator/addressfinder.aspx>
  - Include signature with printed name, address, phone number and legislative district if you know it. Include a picture of your family too; we think your statement will be even more impactful.
- 2. Email Governor Rauner through his constituent page and let him know you oppose the cuts:** <http://www2.illinois.gov/gov/Pages/ContacttheGovernor.aspx>
- 3. Email or Fax a copy of your letter to:**
  - Amy Zimmerman, Director, Chicago Medical-Legal Partnership for Children, [amy@aidslegal.com](mailto:amy@aidslegal.com) or fax to: 312-427-8419
  - Karen Berman, Assistant Director Illinois Policy, Ounce of Prevention Fund, [kberman@ounceofprevention.org](mailto:kberman@ounceofprevention.org) or fax to: 312-346-2981
- 4. Join the EI Facebook page for updates and more information:** <https://www.facebook.com/illinoiseichildren> There will be upcoming budget hearings beginning in March.

### **Not sure what to say to your state legislator? Try the following.**

My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am calling/writing to oppose the proposed budget cuts and eligibility changes to Illinois' Early Intervention program. Increasing the level of delay required for eligibility from the current 30% delay to a 50% delay will be devastating to thousands of Illinois families, including ours. My family was/is a part of the EI program for \_\_\_\_ (# of years/months) \_\_\_\_\_ for our child, who was diagnosed with (percentage) \_\_\_\_\_ delay in (areas of delay). My child receives/received (type of services – e.g. OT, PT, DT, Speech, Social work, nursing, transportation, service coordination) and is now functioning at a \_\_\_\_\_ % delay/no longer requires special education support.

### **Be specific about the challenges your family faced before Early Intervention:**

- My child screamed and cried all day long because we couldn't understand him/her.

- We never went out in public because our child was so behind.
- Our 11-month-old wasn't sitting independently.
- Our 16-month-old wasn't using any words.
- Our 18-month-old wouldn't eat solid foods.
- Our 2-year-old wasn't walking.
- I thought our 2-½-year-old wasn't listening.
- Our 2-½-year-old couldn't hold a spoon or feed him/herself.
- As a parent, I felt isolated and angry most of the time.

**Be specific about how it felt or what it has meant to your family that your child is in the EI system:**

- I no longer feel angry, isolated, or concerned about my child.
- It was a fairly easy process and my child and family have benefitted from our time with his/her therapist.
- Our child has benefitted from the strategies we learned during therapy and really has become a different child as a result.
- Our therapists were well prepared and could be counted on to reliably visit our house every week.
- Talking with my child's team answered a lot of questions for me as I didn't think some of his/her behavior was normal.

**Be specific about how EI has supported you as a parent:**

- It was hard at first – I felt like I had failed as a parent – but the therapists were great about helping me to see how I was helping my child.
- The services offered by EI made a huge difference in my ability to help my child.
- EI therapy helped me feel like I was doing something rather than just worrying about my child.
- I don't know where we would be if we hadn't gotten help early on.
- I am no longer scared that I am a bad parent.

**Be specific about how EI has positively impacted your hopes and dreams for your child's future:**

- I am no longer worried that my child won't be able to make him/herself understood at school, make friends, or perform well academically.

- I'm confident that my child can handle taking a class at the park district or at school; that s/he'll listen and follow directions.
- We can now go out in public because I know how to address his/her behavior.
- My child can attend mainstream classes with mainstream kids.
- I feel empowered to help my child reach his/her potential.

**If your child has turned three**, describe what degree of delay your child had when he/she left the system and if your child is receiving early childhood special education services, describe what those services look like and how much more extensive you believe they would have been if your child was never connected to the early intervention system.

\*Remind reader that: If Illinois moves to a 50% delay it will be one of less than a handful of states with such a restrictive eligibility definition: Only 3 states: Arizona, Alaska, Missouri and the District of Columbia have implemented such a restrictive definition of eligibility.

\*Remind reader that: The birth to three opportunity window closes quickly. Resources taken away from children birth to 3 in the 30-50% developmental delay range will only be kicked forward and multiplied, as conditions which aren't addressed in EI will worsen and be more expensive to remedy by the school district when a child starts preschool or kindergarten.

\*Remind reader that: Less than half of the money spent to provide Early Intervention services in IL comes from state revenue. For every dollar the State cuts from Early Intervention, it loses federal Medicaid matching funds, private insurance and family fees.

\*Remind reader that: Early Intervention is not a stand-alone program – it is a critical part of our early childhood system, providing supports and services to children, families and early childhood providers.

**Changes to EI Eligibility will have to be done by rulemaking. Below are all the members of the General Assembly that serve on the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules (JCAR). These are people you will want to contact once DHS introduces proposed rules. We will post that info on the FB Page: Families, Friends & Fans of IL EI Children once it is posted by DHS.**

**MEMBERS OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATIVE RULES – CONTACT INFORMATION**

1. Senator Don Harmon (co-chair) – 39<sup>th</sup> District

6933 W. North Ave, Oak Park IL 60302  
708-848-2002 | 217-782-8176  
[dkharmon@senatedem.ilga.gov](mailto:dkharmon@senatedem.ilga.gov)

2. Representative Ron Sandack (co-chair) – 81<sup>st</sup> District

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3. Senator Pamela Althoff – 32<sup>nd</sup> District

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4. Senator William “Bill” Brady – 44<sup>th</sup> District

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5. Senator Karen McConnaughay – 33<sup>rd</sup> District

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6. Senator Tony Munoz – 1<sup>st</sup> District

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7. Senator Ira Silverstein – 8<sup>th</sup> District

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8. Representative Gregory Harris – 13<sup>th</sup> District  
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