



GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON
DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL EDUCATION

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& SPECIAL EDUCATION

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April 28, 2025

Re: Support of SB 178 "Expansion of Early Intervention Services"

Dear Senate Health and Social Services Committee Members:

The Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education (the Council) fills a variety of federal and state roles, including serving as the State Interagency Coordinating Council for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities (ICC) as required by Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). Through the ICC, the Council works with Senior and Disability Services (SDS) and advises the Early Intervention/Infant Learning Program (ILP) to ensure infants and toddlers who experience developmental delays across the state receive the services they need to grow and succeed.

Alaska has the most restrictive eligibility criteria for early intervention services in the nation. Currently to qualify for ILP services, a child must exhibit a 50% delay in one developmental area. In other words, a 2-year-old must be functioning at a 1-year-old level to qualify for services. This bill will expand eligibility for the ILP from 50% to 25% developmental delay to align eligibility for ILP services with eligibility for K-12 special education eliminating an inequity of services. A child's brain develops the most from birth to age 5. Expanding eligibility for the ILP we will ensure the services for these children are provided at a time when they will have the most impact rather than delaying services until later years. To assist in funding this expansion, the bill will make "developmental therapy" a billable Medicaid service, allowing the ILP to leverage those funds.

Expansion of eligibility will show a substantial cost savings over the course of a child's education. According to national data, 46% of children who receive early intervention services meet developmental age expectations by age 3 and do not require special education when they enter Kindergarten. Each of those children represents a potential savings of \$229,071 over the course of their public education, when comparing the cost of 3 years of early intervention with 13 years of special education. ***With expansion, the projected additional number of children who would not require special education is 152 each school year, representing a potential annual cost savings of \$34,888,837.***

Other benefits of expansion are as follows:

- Reduced need for adult home and community-based Medicaid services.

- Reduced Crime and Victimization: Fewer children entering the Juvenile Justice system = less burden on child protective services, public safety, and corrections.
- Reduced need for special needs daycare: Allow parents to re-enter the workforce while lowering burden on public assistance programs.
- Increase future workforce: More high school graduates ready to enter post-secondary or vocational programs or to enter the workforce directly and contribute positively to society.

The Council urges you to support ILP program expansion by passing SB 178.

Sincerely,



Jena Crafton
GCDSE Chairperson



Caitlin Poindexter
GCDSE Legislative Committee Chairperson