

Support Early Intervention Supplemental Request

Department Priority: S-02/BA-02

GENERAL BACKGROUND

Early Intervention (EI) services support children from birth to age three who have developmental disabilities or delays. Through the EI program, these children and their families can access services such as Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Speech-Language services and assistive technology. These services are delivered in the family home to give the family the tools they need to turn everyday interactions into opportunities to help children learn and grow. EI can reduce and, in some cases, eliminate the need for Special Education and other public services later in life, so maximizing the number of eligible children is an important investment for Colorado.

THE PROBLEM

During the pandemic, the eligibility criteria for EI was narrowed to accommodate reduced funding, limiting the number of children who are able to access these critical service as well as the potential return-on-investment for Colorado. Additionally, the program continues to be plagued by severe workforce shortages that hamper its ability to fully serve enrolled children. Inadequate provider rates are an important part of the workforce equation along with other strategies.

THE SOLUTION

The Joint Budget Committee should support the Governor's 2023 budget supplemental request. This request aims to address both the eligibility and workforce issues. It would broaden eligibility criteria to cover more children as well as reinvest unused dollars to address workforce shortages.