



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

Swift Fix To EI Program Billing Needed

JAMES L. SEWARD September 23, 2013

| ISSUE: **FAMILIES, HEALTH, CHILDREN, DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES**

ONEONTA, 09/24/13 – State Senator James L. Seward (R/C/I-Oneonta) today announced his strong support for a swift solution to a billing situation that has placed Early Intervention Program services for hundreds of special needs children at risk.

“Worried parents and dedicated providers alike have contacted me in regard to the newly created complexities in the Early Intervention (EI) Program payment system,” said Senator Seward.

“Providers are not being paid, and, more significantly, children in need of vital services are going without the care they desperately need. Swift action must be taken to correct this detrimental situation.”

The New York State Early Intervention Program is part of the national Early Intervention Program for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families and is administered by the New York State Department of Health. A variety of therapeutic and support services are offered to children under 3 years of age with a confirmed disability or established developmental delay.

As part of the 2012-13 state budget, a central statewide administrator of the Early Intervention program was approved with an eye toward mandate relief for counties which were then responsible for managing billing of the program. The rollout of the program, however, has proved to be problematic and many providers have not been reimbursed for

their services.

“My senate colleagues and I expressed concern that the program would not be ready by the ambitious implementation date of April 1, 2013 and encouraged a delayed start. Based on the problematic reports coming in to my office, postponing the change would have been a prudent step,” Seward added.

In a letter to Department of Health Commissioner Dr. Nirav Shah, Senator Seward writes:

“I respectfully urge the department to work diligently to solve this problem and ensure that our hard-working EI providers are rightfully paid for the services they provide. I understand that many of the problems stem from difficulties in coordinating the computer billing systems between the insurance companies and the state. I do appreciate the fact that discussions are underway between the department and the insurance companies and that an effort is being made to ameliorate the problem. However, in the meantime, the state should be reimbursing the providers 100 percent for their services and then seeking recovery from the insurance companies afterwards. EI providers should not suffer financially for these problems which are beyond their control.”

“Young children suffering from developmental disabilities are now being placed on waiting lists because providers are being forced to leave the program. This compounds what is already a demanding and sensitive situation for families with a special needs child and puts the future well-being of our most vulnerable at risk,” said Seward.

Senator Seward is also questioning the selection of an out of state company, Massachusetts-based Public Consulting Group, Inc., as the permanent fiscal agent for the Early Intervention Program and plans to move call center jobs for the program to Tennessee.

“While I am sure that Public Consulting Group is a reputable organization, I have to express my sincere disappointment that New York State tax dollars are being used to create jobs in Tennessee. That seems to run counter to the governor’s “New York Open for Business” campaign, which is designed to attract and grow businesses here in New York,” Seward concluded.