



MASSACHUSETTS EARLY INTERVENTION CONSORTIUM

Joanne Sweeney, President

Rachael Cracknell, President-Elect

May 8, 2020

The Honorable Charlie Baker, Governor of Massachusetts
Massachusetts State House
Office of the Governor, Room 360
Boston, MA 02133

Marylou Sudders, COVID-19 Response Command Center Director
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
One Ashburton Place, 11th Floor
Boston, MA 02108

RE: Urgent Request to Provide Additional Funding to Preserve the Massachusetts Early Intervention System During the COVID-19 Emergency

Thank you for your bold and decisive leadership, which has guided the Commonwealth through the most unprecedented challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. We are grateful that your actions have put the health and safety of our residents first and foremost and your decisions have been guided by science, data and analysis designed to reduce the health, economic and social toll of the Coronavirus.

We are writing as strong supporters of the Massachusetts Early Intervention System to urge you and the Administration to take action to address the financial emergency facing the Commonwealth's EI programs and the 54,000 children and families served each year. We are urging you to provide additional funding of \$13.5 million to stabilize the 59 EI programs impacted by COVID-19 and ensure these essential programs stay open and viable during and after the crisis.

Early Intervention programs have been hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the crisis, the number of babies and toddlers served by EI programs is drastically declining. EI Program child counts are shrinking as new referrals decrease and discharges from the program accelerate due to the crisis. EI programs across the state have sustained aggregate lost revenue of 60% in one month since the State of Emergency was declared. Staff furloughs and layoffs are being implemented due to this mounting revenue shortfall. Massachusetts is actively losing its capacity to sustain its infrastructure of dedicated EI programs and highly educated professionals who respond to the needs of vulnerable families now and in the future once this crisis is over. But you have the ability to change this trajectory, now.

Many EI programs will not survive this crisis without your help. We are urging you to provide additional funding of \$13.5 million now to preserve the quality staff and sustain the Early Intervention service delivery system the Commonwealth has worked for decades to build and is in jeopardy of losing its standard as a national model. The children (aged birth to three) and families served by EI programs throughout the state are counting on EI programs to continue providing critical developmental services for their babies and toddlers. The long-term outcomes of early school success are dependent upon continuous developmental interventions, parent coaching, and nurturing relationships so critical in these first three years. EI programs cannot do that without immediate funding support from you.

c/o Riverside EI Needham 255 Highland Ave. Needham, MA 02494

<https://meiconsortium.org>

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The Massachusetts Early Intervention system is recognized as the national leader in the provision of comprehensive, innovative and cost-effective EI services. Our state was one of the first to extend eligibility to serve children and families deemed at risk for developmental delays. We recognized that a child's development is shaped and impacted in the earliest years by environmental, medical and family factors, including poverty; homelessness; domestic violence; substance misuse or the need for protective services through DCF. But without immediate fiscal support, these children and families most in need will experience service delays, disruption of services and widening health disparities and barriers, particularly in urban areas struggling with high rates of COVID-19 infection and transmission.

Massachusetts needs to retain a strong Early Intervention system. We cannot allow the financial challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic to diminish and threaten this essential support system which lays the foundation for the developmental health and wellbeing of our youngest citizens.

We stand together in urging you to take action today to preserve the Massachusetts Early Intervention system. We support and advocate for the Massachusetts Early Intervention Consortium's (MEIC) proposal written on April 16, 2020 to implement a plan to reinvest unspent budgeted EI funding back into EI Programs. This proposed plan will provide the additional funding needed to help save Massachusetts Early Intervention Programs throughout our great state that have continuously put infants, early childhood and families first.

Respectfully,

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Roca - *Roca's mission is to disrupt the cycle of incarceration and poverty by helping young people transform their lives*

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