

Good Morning! I am writing in support of SB 5513 and wanted to share my person experience with early intervention. My daughter, Mia, was born full term with no complications. We were home hours after birth and everything was as blissful as having a brand new healthy baby can be. Mia was small for full term but nothing alarming. As the days and weeks progressed, Mia struggled to feed. Nothing we did seemed to help. She couldnt take a bottle, wasnt getting enough via nursing and wasnt gaining weight. I am a pediatric physical therapist, Im well connected, and I took her to every one in our area I could think of for help. Nothing seemed to help. She ended up being labeled failure to thrive at 2.5 months old and had a feeding tube put in. Once she was stable, she had home visits from an EI OT to help train her mouth how to work, because she was finally strong enough to try. OT helped a lot, it kept her gaining enough to not require the feeding tube. The OT knew something wasnt quite right though and supported our decision to go to a specialty clinic where it was discovered she had a very tight tongue tie. At almost a year old, she had her tongue released. We thought we were in the clear. She had an easier time eating after the procedure and her motor skills took off. After a year of celebrating what we thought was the end of her rough start, Mia was evaluated again by EI because she had no language. Receptively, she was sharp, but she had no way to express herself. At home, we learned sign language, and when she was evaluated by EI she had over 100 signs. But no verbal language. An EI specialist and speech therapist worked with her from age 2-3 and helped her find her voice. She was as sharp as we thought she was, and now she could show us! The EI providers were amazing. They saw her at daycare, they saw her at home, they coordinated with her outpatient speech provider and they advocated for her to start in an ECSE classroom just before her 3rd birthday which gave her a place to practice her skills with peers. Happily, on her 3rd birthday, she tested out of services, she was talking and there was no indication by what she was saying that she ever had a problem, she had more than made up for the lost time. The EI providers were supportive of our family and helped us through what was a scary time, especially during her failure to thrive period. Providing these services is essential. I cant imagine how far behind she'd be if she hadnt gotten the services when she did. She's now 4 years old and is thriving. You'd never know she had the rough start she did and she has the tools to be successful when she does enter school. She often reflects on her EI teachers with nothing but admiration for that time. Doesn't every child deserve to be supported in such a way? Wouldn't helping every child be as prepared for school be in the best interest of not just the child, but our community? Thank you.