

Preamble

WHEREAS, Brain research confirms that the most rapid brain development occurs in the first three years of life; and

WHEREAS, The General Assembly has recognized the immediate need for effective strategies to prepare all children to enter school ready to learn; and

WHEREAS, The National Academy of Sciences concludes that the course of development for young children can be altered by effective early interventions; and

WHEREAS, A key component of effective early intervention is the Program of Hearing-Impaired Infants; and

WHEREAS, The Maryland Infants and Toddlers Program provides effective, integrated services to young children from birth through age ~~two~~ three who demonstrate a 25% delay in development, have a diagnosed condition with a high probability of delay, or demonstrate atypical development or behavior; and

WHEREAS, Early intervention services are provided in a child's natural environment, such as home, child care settings, and community learning centers; and

WHEREAS, Early intervention services and strategies are modeled for parents and caregivers so that development may continue in the child's daily living routines; and

WHEREAS, An Individualized Family Service Plan is implemented to assist with the needs of the family, as well as the young child receiving services; and

WHEREAS, The number of children and families receiving services from the Maryland Infants and Toddlers Program has increased 30% since 1995, with the State appropriation remaining at \$400,000 since fiscal year 1997; and

WHEREAS, The current level of available federal, State, and local funds is insufficient to provide early intervention services to the steadily increasing number of infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families in compliance with Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and COMAR 13A.13.01; and

WHEREAS, 24% of the young children receiving early intervention through the Maryland Infants and Toddlers Program in 2000 required no special education services at age three; now, therefore,

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article - Education

8-416.

[(a) The Department shall be the lead agency for supervising and monitoring a statewide, community-based interagency system of comprehensive early intervention services to eligible infants and toddlers, birth through age 2, and their families.]