

April 18th, 2016

The Honorable Wm. Weston J. Newton
Chairman, Legislative Oversight Committee
228 Blatt Building
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Chairman Newton,

We write this letter to express our concerns about the Part C “BabyNet” program in South Carolina. We represent thousands of patients, parents, and providers here in South Carolina. We work every day to ensure that the children in South Carolina receive the best early intervention services they can, and we are deeply troubled by the fact that we are currently the only state in the country to be in the highest need of federal compliance.

We understand that there are many strong opinions surrounding the reauthorization of the First Steps to School Readiness Office (H.4774/S.1038), but we want to highlight for you one thing that we all agree on: A new lead agency must be selected to run the BabyNet program in South Carolina. This is not an indictment on the state office at First Steps, but rather a call to reshuffle the deck after almost **12 years of federal non-compliance**.

The BabyNet program provides critical services to families in South Carolina whose children may be facing correctible developmental delays or lifelong disabilities. However, too many children are falling through the cracks and are not receiving these life changing services. Moreover, scientific research shows that early intervention services received in the first five years of a child’s life can improve outcomes and that in turn leads to lower costs for the state in the long run.

The vital services that BabyNet offers its families are too important to let the politics of reauthorization prevent the program from being placed with a new lead agency with sufficient funding, that meets the needs of South Carolina’s most vulnerable.

Thank you,

