



New York State Public Health Association (NYSPHA)

August 19, 2022

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York State
New York State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

RE: NYSPHA Recommends signing A9080-A/S8046-A (Hevesi/Mannion) relating to a study of the number of children in foster care who have a developmental disability.

Dear Governor Hochul,

The New York State Public Health Association (NYSPHA) is pleased to provide our recommendations to you on these bills, which have passed both houses of the legislature. NYSPHA is the New York affiliate of the American Public Health Association (APHA) and serves as the statewide organization for members from all disciplines across the spectrum of public health professionals, organizations, academia, and students pursuing careers in public health. Our mission is to improve the public's health through advocacy, education, networking, and professional development.

The above referenced bill proposes to determine the number of children in foster care who have been diagnosed with a developmental disability. This is an important issue because developmental disabilities are common in foster children and yet this population often has inadequate access to appropriate resources and services.

An important consideration for this bill is that the number of children in foster care with a diagnosis of a developmental disability is not an accurate count of the number of children who actually have a developmental disability. To have a diagnosis of a developmental disability, a child must have appropriate testing and evaluation by a qualified provider, with the accuracy of the result additionally dependent on someone knowing the child well enough to give an accurate history of the child. Children in foster care have limited access to care and their developmental histories can be difficult to piece together. Because of this, many children who truly have a developmental disability may not have received this diagnosis or may receive an incorrect diagnosis.

The National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW) is an ongoing study of children in foster care that, among other things, gives insight into the number of children with developmental disabilities nationwide. The approach of the NSCAW is to do a comprehensive assessment on a sample of children rather than looking for existing diagnoses in the whole population. The sampling approach provides opportunity to identify children with a development disability who have not received a diagnosis. We would suggest considering the NSCAW as a resource for partnership or a model study design. Another consideration when studying the foster care population as a whole

would be to gather information not only on developmental disability diagnoses that a child has received, but to additionally gather information on what screenings or evaluations have been done to understand if the child ever had the opportunity to receive the diagnosis. That many children in foster care may have undiagnosed or misdiagnosed developmental disabilities should be addressed when conducting a study on this issue.

NYSPPHA's Recommendations.

We respectfully ask you to sign A9080-A/S8046-A (Hevesi/Mannion) relating to a study of the number of children in foster care who have a developmental disability (with suggested improvements to help meet the purposes of the bills).

Sincerely,



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CC: *Elizabeth Fine, Counsel to the Governor*
Karen Persichilli Keogh, Secretary to the Governor