

Congratulations to the Graduates



Office of New York City Councilman Mark Weprin

New York City Councilman Mark Weprin (D-Queens) (R) visits the Shema Kolainu School and Center for Children with Autism in Boro Park in honor of graduation day, on Tuesday. Weprin is the sponsor of the Council's Autism Initiative, which helps fund programs like Shema Kolainu around the city. L-R: A Shema Kolainu student; Dr. Joshua Weinstein, founder and president of Shema Kolainu; government relations consultant Ezra Friedlander; and Councilman Weprin.

Early Intervention Providers Get Rule-Change Reprieve

BY HAMODIA STAFF

NEW YORK – An advocacy group lobbying against service reductions and funding cuts to the state program that helps young developmentally delayed children has won important concessions in its battle.

At the quarterly meeting of the state's Early Intervention Coordinating Council on Tuesday, officials agreed to postpone and revise regulation changes that would reduce payments to providers and likely shorten their sessions with children.

Following testimony at the meeting from members of United New York Early Intervention Providers (UNYEIP), comprised of about 1,500 therapists and parents, a plan to shrink billable session time into increments of 15 minutes instead of hour blocks and exclude case meetings from billable activities was set aside. Opponents of the plan say that, since sessions are being set at shorter durations, it will lead to less billing time and lower revenue for providers already reeling from steep rate cuts.

DOH officials agreed to repeat the 45-day public comment period in order to incorporate more provider and community concerns into the final rule change, according to Leslie Grubler, founder and director of UNYEIP.

Grubler said the DOH will hold public hearings in New York City and an upstate location within the next two weeks. UNYEIP is putting together a line-up of parents, educators, health care professionals and EI providers to make statements at those forums.

In addition, Grubler said, the

DOH clarified that dividing sessions into 15-minute segments, if implemented, would not result in sessions lasting only 15 minutes.

The Early Intervention program, administered by the Department of Health, provides a range of free or subsidized services to children aged 0-3 who have or are at risk for developmental delays. The services are delivered through licensed, contracted agencies and individual professionals.

"We are cautiously optimistic but pleased that the Department of Health and Bureau of Early Intervention listened, responded and acted," Grubler told *Hamodia*.

DOH spokesman Jeffrey Hammond confirmed that officials spoke with UNYEIP members on Tuesday but did not respond to an inquiry about details.

According to a UNYEIP memo, the organization sent a team of 10 speakers and many more supporters to the EICC meeting, and submitted a 48-page analysis of the changes that they say would lead to children getting less help and providers being pushed out of the field due to waning payment rates.

James Clancy, assistant commissioner of governmental and external affairs for DOH, attended the EICC meeting. He was unavailable for comment yesterday. Prior to the EICC meeting, the UNYEIP delegation met with James Introne, state deputy secretary of health.

Early Intervention payment rates for home-based services were slashed 10 percent in April 2010. This April, rates for both home-based and community-based services were slashed another 5 percent.

Rep. Weiner Resigns

NEW YORK (AP) – New York Rep. Anthony Weiner soberly announced his resignation from Congress yesterday, following a scandal.

Democratic Party leaders, concerned that Weiner could weigh the party down in the 2012 elections, welcomed the announcement after days spent trying to coax, push and finally coerce the 46-year-old into quitting. Known

as brash, liberal and ambitious, Weiner had run for mayor of New York in 2005 and had been expected to do so again. He was in his seventh term in Congress.

At an appearance in Brooklyn that drew hecklers as well as supporters, Weiner apologized "for the personal mistakes I have made and the embarrassment I have caused."

Weiner's outspoken, in-your-

face style cheered liberal supporters and angered conservatives. He even irritated some party leaders in 2009 when he led the charge for a government-run health care system long after the White House had made it clear that Obama was opposed.

Weiner's district includes parts of Queens and Brooklyn. New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo has the authority to call a special election to fill the seat once the congressman submits his resignation.

Gonzalez Fights to Save Local Jobs

BROOKLYN – Councilwoman Sara M. González joined with workers, community members, union leaders and other local elected officials on Wednesday in the struggle to save 148 union jobs at a food processing facility in Sunset Park.

The Maramount Corporation recently announced a decision to move their operations to Pennsylvania, where they would hire non-union employees. The sprawling plant along First Avenue nets tens of millions of

dollars annually by providing food services to New York City agencies like the Department of Education and the Department of Homeless Services.

The Councilwoman addressed a huge rally assembled outside the plant.

"Sunset Park in my District is home to approximately sixty percent of those workers and all support local businesses," Councilwoman González declared.

She has been an adamant voice in the City Council effort to increase the amount of food the City buys locally and extols the benefits that reduced transportation produces in terms of freshness and impact on the environment.

The councilwoman said that Council Speaker Christine Quinn has agreed to not support continuing contracts with Maramount if it shifts local jobs to non-union positions in Pennsylvania.

Against the Tide: Hikind's Defense of Morality

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There is no poll that has been taken to demonstrate those that are for, those that are against this bill. Who is more compassionate? Who cares more about their fellow human beings? So that whole debate is extremely unfair, and threats that are made against people who are opposed to this bill, as has happened, that is also unfair.

[Such] is surely not the way to do this. As our governor said, this should be an issue of conscience, not fear, and anyone who has political fear, I feel sorry for them. This is something that you do from your heart, what you really believe...

[The following are] my views, and I have a right to my views. And you have a right to yours.

When you study the Bible, when you study the Torah, it's a way of life. It is how I should treat you. It is how I should behave towards you. I shouldn't hurt your feelings. I shouldn't upset you. I should be a *mentch*, a decent human being. That's what it's all about.

Judaism is [between] man and G-d; that is only one part of it. Another part of it is what we call *bein adam l'chaveiro*, between man and man, how we behave towards each other.

I didn't make it up, and G-d is very clear about it. And some people don't care. You have a right not to care; that's

what America is all about. We should respect each other.

But I've got a problem. The Torah is so clear on this subject. I'm sorry; there is no choice for me, there is no choice on this, and I am open-minded. There are certain things you can't compromise on.

If only we would treat each other the way the Torah talks, the way the Bible talks. Respect. You know the arguments that have been made over the past few months? I don't remember anyone ever showing me a poll in 2009, anyone circulating polls to me to tell me why I should be for or against [marriage redefinition]. Because those polls show that most New Yorkers were against [it].

By the way, the very latest Sienna poll, where people in New York were asked what are the important issues to them – guess how important this issue was? Sixteen percent said this was important. Sixteen percent. Now I know to a lot of people here it's extremely important and I understand that, but I can't help you. And no one here should have any fear. Do what your heart tells you...

Talking about civil rights, the Sienna poll that was circulated so often, when you look at the minority community in that poll, 46 percent said yes, 45 percent no. That's a minority community. [It's not like] they know nothing about civil rights in the black communi-

ty, but that was the poll, and all the polls pretty much indicate the same thing...

We forget about your views and what you really believe in. You know why? [Redefining marriage will] bring \$400 million into the economy of New York! Throw away traditional marriage [for] \$400 million. That's an argument? What happened to our principles? What happened to doing what we think is right in your heart?

Sometimes people make mistakes. They say certain things, you know.

Thank G-d, I can say to you today, I have never done that in my entire life against any group of people. I have my differences with different people, but I've never uttered a racist remark against any group – because how could I? Not with my background.

It should not be about politics, it should be about what you believe. And we should respect the different points of view.

This issue is crystal-clear. This issue is mentioned throughout the Bible. It's mentioned not only in the Five Books, but in *Jeremiah*, *Ezekiel*, *Isaiah*.

Do not let politics get in the way. Do what you think is right, and if you are prepared to redefine marriage tonight and the next day or two in the Senate, then do it, but think of what you are doing. This is serious business.

Thank you very much.