What is Infant and Early Childhood Mental Wellness?
- The developing capacity of a child from birth to age five to experience, express and regulate emotions, form close, secure interpersonal relationships, and explore their environment and learn, all in the context of family, community, and culture.
- Infant and early childhood mental wellness is the foundation for all future development and is necessary for the development of curiosity, persistence, motivation, and trust.

Why is Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Important?
- Research shows that 16% to 18% of infants and young children can and do experience mental health challenges; roughly the same prevalence rate as experienced by older children.
- Many mental health challenges occurring in the first years of life persist and increase the risk of problems in the early years, and to serious long-term health, mental health, and educational challenges.
- Infant and early childhood mental health challenges can be identified using developmentally appropriate tools and can be treated effectively through relationship-based therapies.

What will this Legislation do?
The bill would require the Executive Office of Health and Human Services to develop a plan by June 30, 2023 to promote best practices for screening, assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of mental health conditions for children from birth through age 5 with RIte Care/Medicaid insurance, to include:
- Strategies to promote use of developmentally appropriate and research-based screening and evaluation tools, a diagnostic system, and effective therapies.
- A plan to strengthen infant and early childhood mental health skills, knowledge and practice of all providers who work with young children (0-5).
- A plan to establish a registry of trained infant/early childhood mental health professionals that can be a resource across health care, education, child welfare, and human service settings.
- Strategies to address intergenerational effects of racism, economic insecurity, and toxic stress that influence the mental health of parents/caregivers, babies, and young children.