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### **ACCESS TO QUALITY PRE-K IN MICHIGAN OUTPACES OTHER STATES**

#### *Efforts to Expand Preschool Education Enjoy Bipartisan Support in Michigan*

**New York, NY**—Many 3- and 4-year-olds across the nation still lack access to high-quality preschool education despite modest gains in enrollment, quality, and funding, according to an [annual report](#) by the nonpartisan National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) at Rutgers University. While several states, including Michigan and New York made significant progress through a concerted effort to increase enrollment and funding and improve quality, progress is slow and uneven nationally and quality standards are particularly low in some of the nation's largest states such as California, Florida and Texas. Despite the relatively good news this year, the rate of progress is so slow that it will take 150 years for the nation to reach 75 percent enrollment in state pre-K even at age 4.

In Michigan, enrollment increased by 6,650 4-year-olds in 2014-2015 to provide access for more than 31,000 children, one-third of the state's pre-K population. As a result, Michigan improved its national ranking for access by six positions to 15<sup>th</sup>, while maintaining quality standards— meeting eight of NIEER's 10 minimum quality standards benchmarks and improving financial support. Michigan increased per child spending for 4-year-olds by \$650, or 10 percent to remain in the upper tier of states for dedicating state resources to pre-K.

"Michigan's economic future depends on early investment in its kids," said NIEER Director Steve Barnett. "Ensuring that every child has access to high-quality preschool can help to pave the way for their success in school, on the job, and in their communities. Michigan has demonstrated great progress on early education with strong leadership from Gov. Snyder and the legislature, yet more remains to be done. Your kids, their families, and your state depend on it."

*The State of Preschool Report* for the 2014-2015 school year, which includes objective state-by-state profiles and rankings, indicates that urgent action is needed from lawmakers at all levels of government to ensure that every child – particularly those from low-income families – have access to high-quality early education. For the first year, NIEER also analyzed states' early education workforce and Dual Language Learner (DLL) policies, which reveal significant disparities in Michigan for pre-K teacher compensation as those working in public schools receive on average \$3,373 more than teachers in nonpublic settings. Regardless of pre-K teacher's work setting, their average annual salary of \$33,000 is well below the average K-3 teacher salary of \$62,778. Also, in a state where pre-K enrolled 7554 DLL preschoolers, 62 percent of all 4-year-olds identified as DLL, Michigan doesn't require specialized qualification for teachers working with these students but requires the provision of certain DLL services

and supports such as providing materials to families in their home language and sponsoring professional development for teachers working with DLL children.

The report finds that total state spending on pre-K programs across the nation increased by 10 percent, or \$553 million, since the previous year, bringing state spending in 2014-2015 to over \$6.2 billion. The number of children served by state-funded pre-K increased by 37,167 in 2014-2015, bringing the total to almost 1.4 million children – the largest number of children ever served by state-funded pre-K. With an average rate of \$4,489, states also made one of the most significant increases in spending per child in recent history.

Despite these gains, the report's findings underscore that those states like California, Florida, and Texas with the largest populations of young children are falling behind—they were among the states that met the fewest quality standards benchmarks, and Texas and Florida also reduced enrollment and spending in 2014-2015. Nationally, enrollment has risen by just one percentage point for both 4- and 3-year olds over five years. The sluggish pace of change disproportionately impacts low-income families.

“We’re encouraged to see several states, such as Michigan, New York, and South Carolina increasing enrollment and improving quality, and new pre-K initiatives appearing in Mississippi, Hawaii, and Indiana, but access to high-quality pre-K in the United States remains low and highly unequal,” said Barnett. “Expanding access to quality pre-K programs is one of the best investments we can make, and it’s critical that we raise and standardize salaries for early education teachers and have strong Dual Language Learner policies in states with large Hispanic populations. State governments should increase and stabilize funding for pre-K and raise standards for the benefit of all children.”

*The State of Preschool Report* reviews state-funded pre-K programs on 10 benchmarks of quality standards, including the presence of a qualified instructor, class size, teacher-to-student ratio, presence of an assistant, and length of instruction per day.

For more information on *The State of Preschool 2015* yearbook and detailed state-by-state breakdowns on quality benchmarks, enrollment, and funding, please click [here](#).

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*The National Institute for Early Education Research ([www.nieer.org](http://www.nieer.org)) at the Graduate School of Education, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, supports early childhood education policy and practice through independent, objective research.*