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2017 State of Preschool Report Shows Slow Growth in Hawaii **HI pre-K enrolls just 2% of 4-year-olds, meets most quality standards benchmarks**

New Brunswick, NJ—A new state-by-state report shows more young children enrolled in public pre-K programs nationwide, with Hawaii ranking last in access to preschool for 4-year-olds, serving only 2% during the program’s third year of operation.

The State of Preschool 2017 annual report finds states heeding the demand for pre-K and expanding access to publicly funded programs in a variety of settings, based on 2016-17 data. But instead of supporting quality early learning with adequate resources, most state programs invest too little to help children catch up with their more advantaged peers by kindergarten.

Hawaii ranks in the top ten on preschool spending-per-child and met 7 out of 10 NIEER minimum quality standards benchmarks. However, its state-funded program enrolls only 376 children, with an additional 120 children served in high-quality preschool funded by a federal Preschool Development Grant. The state plans to expand eligibility to children from families at or below 300% of the federal poverty level and add classrooms in 2018-2019, with plans to steadily increase access as it works to institute an infrastructure that ensures high quality is sustained.

“Our report highlights which states invest best in their young children and which leave too many children behind,” said NIEER Senior Co-Director Steven Barnett. “Hawaii is in the growing stages. Policymakers need to make good on promises to improve access, funding, and quality.”

This year’s report includes a special section on policies affecting Dual Language Learners, and also highlights changes since 2002, when NIEER began tracking state pre-K. (*see box for Hawaii specifics*)

Enrollment in state-funded preschool programs has more than doubled since 2002, according to the report. Nationally, 43 states, D.C. and Guam now provide publicly funded preschool to more than 1.5 million children. However, funding has failed to keep pace, with spending-per-child *decreasing* when adjusted for inflation.

“Fifteen years ago, only three states and the District of Columbia enrolled more than one-third of their 4-year-olds in publicly funded pre-K,” said Dr. Allison Friedman-Krauss, report co-author. “Today, that is the national average. But progress is patchy – 19 states still enroll less than 10% of their 4-year-olds.”

HAWAII 2016-2017 Fast Facts

Met 7 of 10 new quality standards benchmarks

Enrolled 376 children, an increase of 1 from 2015-16

Total state funding = \$2.5 million, a decrease of \$327,741 from 2015-16 (inflation-adjusted)

State spending-per-child = \$6,649, compared to \$7,541 in 2015-16 (inflation-adjusted)

Hawaii allows bilingual instruction and collects information on preschoolers’ home language

National rankings:

- 44 in access for 4-year-olds
- 9 in state spending per child

The State of Preschool 2017 yearbook was supported with funding provided by the Heising-Simons Foundation. Data used in the report come from a general survey funded by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). The supplemental survey of state policies related to dual language learners and report was supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The findings, interpretations, and conclusions in this report are solely those of the authors. For more information and detailed state-by-state profiles on quality access, and funding, please visit www.nieer.org.

The National Institute for Early Education Research (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. For more information, contact: Michelle Ruess mruess@nieer.org 848-932-4350