

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
April 18, 2018

NIEER Contact:  
Michelle Ruess  
848.932.4350

Media Contact:  
Morgan Williams  
202-836-9890

## **2017 State of Preschool Report Highlights Problems in Massachusetts** ***MA commitment to pre-K falls short, as funding, enrollment decline***

*New Brunswick, NJ*—A new state-by-state report shows more young children enrolled in public pre-K programs nationwide, with Massachusetts investing less in pre-K and enrolling fewer children.

*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.

Massachusetts enrollment fell overall, totaling about 8% of 4-year-olds and 5% of 3-year-olds in the state. State funding fell more than \$500,000 (adjusted for inflation). A federal Preschool Development Grant helped finance additional preschool seats in the state beyond the two state-funded preschool programs.

“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. “Massachusetts is seen as a leader in K-12 education. But the state needs to demonstrate the same commitment to expanding pre-K access and funding—or risk leaving children behind.”

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

### **MASSACHUSETTS 2016-2017 Fast Facts**

Met 6.3 of 10 new quality standards benchmarks

Enrolled 12,657 children, a decrease of 1,074 from 2015-16

Total state funding = \$41,634,101, a decrease of \$504,395 from 2015-16

State spending-per-child = \$3,289, compared to \$3,069 in 2015-16

IPLE collects data on preschoolers home language; UPK has policies to support preschool DLLs

#### National rankings:

- 35 in access for 4-year-olds
- 15 in access for 3-year-olds
- 37 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](http://www.nieer.org).*

*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. For more information, contact: Michelle Ruess [mruess@nieer.org](mailto:mruess@nieer.org) 848-932-4350*