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2017 State of Preschool Report Reflects Some Progress in Illinois ***IL boosts pre-K spending following years of budget woes; but enrollment declines***

New Brunswick, NJ—A new state-by-state report shows more young children enrolled in public pre-K programs nationwide, with Illinois serving a higher percentage of 3-year-olds than most states.

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.

Illinois' investment in pre-K grew by 25%, and state spending-per-child rose by more than \$800 to \$4,226, in 2016-17. Illinois pre-K served a quarter of 4-year-olds statewide—down from 32% as recently as 2010—and 20% of 3-year-olds.

“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. “After years of neglect, Illinois is moving in the right direction with increased investment. But the state must do more to live up to its program name of ‘Preschool for All’.”

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 ILLINOIS 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.”

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

ILLINOIS 2016-2017 Fast Facts

Met 8 of 10 new quality standards benchmarks

Enrolled 72,007 children, a decrease of 1,111 from 2015-16

Total state funding = \$304,314,676, an increase of \$55,140,265 from 2015-16

State spending-per-child = \$4,226, compared to \$3,408 in 2015-16

Illinois is one of only 3 states requiring bilingual certification for lead teachers working with preschool Dual Language Learners

National rankings:

- 22 in access for 4-year-olds
- 4 in access for 3-year-olds
- 26 in state spending per child

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