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Contact:

Allison Muhendorf, *Longleaf Strategies*, allison@longleafstrategies.com, (334) 450-1027 (m)

Oregon Supports Pre-K Quality, Additional Funding Needed to Expand Access to More Children

States looking to address the child care crisis are expanding access to free pre-K for 3- and 4-year-olds. However, researchers warn that access without quality isn't enough to improve student outcomes. Meanwhile, Georgia Pre-K sets a new example for the nation.

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. - A new national [report](#) released today finds that Oregon ranks 36th in the nation in providing preschool to 4-year-olds, down from 34th last year, and remained 14th in the nation for preschool access for 3-year-olds. In 2024-2025, Oregon enrolled 17% of 4-year-olds and 13% of 3-year-olds across its 2 state funded preschool programs. Oregon is one of the few states that provides adequate funding per child to meet state standards and support quality.

The [National Institute for Early Education Research's 2025 State of Preschool Yearbook](#) presents a critical snapshot of preschool education in America. Currently, 44 states and DC fund preschool programs. Most state pre-K programs continue to primarily or only serve 4-year-olds. Nationally, enrollment reached 37% of 4-year-olds but only 9% of three-3-olds.

Additional Oregon findings for the 2024-2025 school year:

- Oregon's 2 preschool programs enrolled 12,687 children, an increase of 90 from the prior year.
- State spending totaled \$216,587,540, down \$22,543,317 (9%), adjusted for inflation, since last year.
- State spending per child equaled \$17,072 in 2024-2025.
- Oregon met an average of 7.7 research-based quality standards benchmarks recommended by NIEER (Oregon Prenatal to Kindergarten met 9 while Preschool Promise met 6).

"While Oregon has prioritized providing full school day programs that benefit children and parents, these programs do not have the capacity to serve even half of the three- and four-year-olds under 200 percent of the federal poverty level," **said NIEER director Steve Barnett**. "Many more children could benefit from Oregon's preschool programs, but only if funding is increased to support expansion without reducing quality or duration."

Nationally, state support for preschool education hit record highs in enrollment and funding in 2024-2025. The pace of growth slowed, however, compared to the prior year, and many states continue to lag behind pre-pandemic enrollment levels.

Georgia's state-funded pre-K program for 4-year-olds made history this year. It became the largest state-funded preschool program in the nation to meet all 10 quality benchmarks recommended by NIEER, and the first universal program to do so. Only 5 additional states meet all 10 of NIEER's research-based benchmarks for quality —Alabama, Hawaii, Michigan, Mississippi, and Rhode Island — in this year's report. None of those programs have the reach of Georgia's Pre-K Program. NIEER's benchmarks measure essential preschool quality indicators, including teacher qualifications, class sizes, early learning standards, and curriculum supports.

"Not only does preschool access vary by which state a child happens to live in, but so does the

OREGON: 2025 NATIONAL RANKINGS

- Enrollment at age 4: 36th (17%)
- Enrollment at age 3: 14th (13%)
- State spending per child: 3rd (\$17,072)
- All reported spending per child: 3rd (\$17,072)
- Average benchmarks met: 7.7

quality of that preschool experience,” **said Allison Friedman-Krauss, lead author of the report.** “Only high-quality early care and education programs support children’s development enough to result in lasting academic and other gains that ultimately deliver savings for taxpayers. Oregon should maintain its commitment to quality preschool”.

States spent nearly \$14.4 billion on preschool in 2024-2025. Twenty-eight states increased their investments in preschool from the prior year, for a total increase of \$434 million, or 3%, adjusted for inflation. Including federal and local dollars, total spending was almost \$17.7 billion. Three states each spent more than \$1 billion last year: California (\$4.1 billion), New Jersey (\$1.2 billion), and New York (\$1 billion). Together, these 3 states account for 45% of all state preschool spending. Texas adds almost another \$1 billion.

Additional information about the *2025 State of Preschool Yearbook*, including individual state profiles and maps, graphs, and state rankings, can be found at www.nieer.org.

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The National Institute for Early Education Research at the Rutgers Graduate School of Education, New Brunswick, NJ, supports early childhood education policy and practice through independent, objective research and the translation of research to policy and practice.