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2017 State of Preschool Report Shows Lack of Progress in Connecticut ***Connecticut pre-K investment declines but remains among top in US***

New Brunswick, NJ—A new state-by-state report shows more young children enrolled in public pre-K programs nationwide, with Connecticut enrolling 30% of 4-year-olds and 8.5% of 3-year-olds across three state-funded pre-K programs.

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.

Despite a decrease in spending, Connecticut ranked in the top 5 states for pre-k funding. Connecticut's Child Day Care Contracts meets four of NIEER's quality standards benchmarks; School Readiness meets five; and Smart Start meets six.

"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. "Connecticut has more work to do to ensure children are not left behind. Despite high spending per child, quality standards remain low."

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 CONNECTICUT 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."

CONNECTICUT 2016-2017 Fast Facts

Met 4.9 of 10 new quality standards benchmarks

Enrolled 14,778 children, a decrease of 162 from 2015-16

Total state funding = \$115,514,745, a decrease of \$3,757,591 from 2015-16

State spending-per-child = \$7,817, compared to \$7,983 in 2015-16

Only Smart Start collects data on children's home language; No state policies to support preschool DLLs

National rankings:

- 20 in access for 4-year-olds
- 11 in access for 3-year-olds
- 5 in state spending per child

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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