

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

April 17, 2019

NIEER Contact:

[Michelle Ruess](#)

609-658-6873 Cell

848-932-4350 Office

## **2018 State of Preschool Report Shows Colorado Losing Ground** ***Decrease in pre-K spending; enrollment and quality remain stagnant***

*New Brunswick, NJ*—Colorado state preschool funding fell, compared to last year, as the state served 23% of 4-year-olds and 8% of 3-year-olds – below the national average, according to new research by the National Institute for Early Education Research.

*The State of Preschool 2018* annual report, based on 2017-18 academic year data, finds just a third of 4-year-olds and 5.5 percent of 3-year-olds enrolled in public preschool programs nationwide—virtually no change in years. State funding is failing to keep pace with even the slow increases in enrollment and state spending per child has *decreased*, when adjusted for inflation. Inadequate funding undermines classroom quality, and most states fail to pay pre-K teachers comparably to K-3 teachers.

Colorado decreased pre-K funding by more than \$7.5 million, and is well below the national average in spending per child. Colorado meets just 5 of NIEER's 10 quality standards benchmarks and does not provide salary or benefit parity for state pre-K teachers.

“Nationally, we are disappointed by the lack of progress,” said NIEER Founder and Senior Co-Director Steven Barnett, Ph.D. “Colorado also has lost ground in spending and enrollment. The state should focus on investing more resources to improve quality and expand access to the program.”

This year's report includes a special section on policies affecting the preschool teacher workforce, focusing on salary and benefit parity. (*see box for Colorado specifics*)

Enrollment has more than doubled since 2002—with almost 1.6 million children enrolled nationwide—but expansion has slowed in recent years. In some states, slow growth is due to a shift from part-day to full-day programs, which can better support child development as well as family work schedules, but nevertheless leaves many children unserved.

The *State of Preschool 2018 yearbook* was supported with funding provided by the Heising-Simons Foundation. 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

### **Colorado 2017-18 Fast Facts**

Met 5 of 10 quality standards benchmarks

Enrolled 21,446 children, a decrease of 176 from 2016-17

Total state funding = \$54,374,180, a decrease of \$7,633,514 from 2016-17

State spending-per-child = \$2,535, compared to \$2,868 in 2016-17

No requirements for salary or benefit parity with K-3

National rankings:

- 28 in access for 4-year-olds
- 11 in access for 3-year-olds
- 39 in state spending per child