

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **2018 State of Preschool Report Shows Progress Stalled in Georgia State increases teacher salaries, despite \$5.6 million reduction in state spending**

*New Brunswick, NJ*— Georgia did not add to enrollment and is no longer among the very top states for the percentage of 4-year-olds served, ranking 8<sup>th</sup>, according to new research from 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.

Georgia has a slight reduction in the number of 4-year-olds served in pre-K but is still above the national average. However, the 2% reduction in state spending makes it difficult for the state to improve policies to meet more quality standards.

“Nationally, we are disappointed by the lack of progress and concerned about the number of children missing the quality early learning experiences that can make a lifelong difference,” said NIEER Founder and Senior Co-Director Steven Barnett, Ph.D. “Georgia is has stalled short of its goals despite promising pre-K for all, with little change in enrollment and spending, and that in the wrong direction. Georgia needs to renew its commitment to offering quality pre-K to every child.”

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

### **Georgia 2017-18 Fast Facts**

Met 8 of 10 quality standards benchmarks

Enrolled 80,536 children, a decrease of 338 from 2016-17

Total state funding = \$355,281,106 a decrease of \$5,665,217 from 2016-17

State spending-per-child = \$4,411, compared to \$4,463 in 2016-17

Requires a BA and starting salary parity with K-3 for all pre-K teachers

National rankings:

- 8 in access for 4-year-olds
- 27 in state spending per child