

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
April 22, 2020

Contact: Ernest Landante, Jr.  
[elandante@nieer.org](mailto:elandante@nieer.org)  
848-932-0770

## **Louisiana's 3 State-funded Pre-K Programs Remain Stagnant as COVID-19 Threatens Quality Remains Steady in State Pre-K**

*NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ* — The COVID-19 pandemic is putting pre-K education at greater risk, including in Louisiana, which enrolls 30 percent of its 4-year-olds in state-funded pre-K, according to a new report from the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER).

Louisiana was below the national average in 4-year-old state-funded pre-K enrollment. Nationally, pre-K enrollment surpassed 1.6 million in the 2018-2019 academic year.

Louisiana's state spending decreased for their three state-funded programs for the third year in a row, and per child spending for each program fell below the national average. These programs are one part of Louisiana's investment in early childhood and in 2018-19, 96% of "at-risk" children statewide were served in early childhood programming.

NIEER's *The State of Preschool 2019* annual report finds states investing more than \$8.7 billion in pre-K. But progress has been uneven, exacerbating inequality in early education opportunity and widening gaps between the best and worst states for educating young children. The expected recession will make progress more difficult.

"Even when the economy has been strong, progress providing state pre-K has been slow and uneven," said Dr. Steven Barnett, NIEER's senior co-director and founder. "With another recession likely, extraordinary state and federal action will be needed to ensure our youngest learners are not just protected, but better served."

Louisiana met an average of 7.9 of ten minimum standards for high-quality preschool education and spent \$4,701 in state funds per student. Ten states met fewer than half the minimum standards for quality. State spending per child varies by a factor of 10, from more than \$10,000 to less than \$1,000.

"Louisiana's progress across their three state-funded pre-K programs has stalled. But the state does reach nearly all at-risk 4-year-olds when other preschool programs are considered," said Barnett. "We are encouraged that the legislature recently increased early childhood education funding, including a \$4 million increase for LA 4."

Despite the economic outlook, pre-K can be protected and advance because politicians from both sides of the aisle and states with very different political leanings have found common ground in offering high quality education to young children.

"States that could not be more different politically, like Michigan and Alabama and Oklahoma and New Jersey, share a commitment to high-quality preschool education," said Barnett. "While there are issues dividing the country, our survey finds quality early childhood education is one where bipartisan agreement is possible."

*The National Institute for Early Education Research (www.nieer.org) at the Rutgers Graduate School of Education, New Brunswick, NJ, supports early childhood education policy and practice through independent, objective research.*

*The State of Preschool 2019 yearbook was supported with funding from 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).*

### **LOUISIANA: 2018-2019 FAST FACTS**

Met an average of 7.9 out of 10 quality standards benchmarks.

Enrolled 18,841 children, a decrease of 70 from 2017-2018.

Total state funding was \$88,579,785 (including TANF), a decrease of \$4,238,469 from 2017-2018 (inflation adjusted).

State spending-per-child was \$4,701, compared to \$4,908 in 2017-2018 (inflation adjusted).

Louisiana's national rankings:

- 22nd in access for 4-year-olds
- 25th in state spending per child