

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
April 22, 2020

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

## **Mississippi Makes Some Progress Serving Preschool Children Meets All 10 New NIEER Quality Standards Benchmarks for First Time**

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

Mississippi trails the national average in 4-year-old pre-K enrollment. Nationally, pre-K enrollment surpassed 1.6 million in the 2018-2019 academic year.

Pre-K enrollment and spending increased slightly in Mississippi, which joined just three other states in meeting all 10 new quality standards benchmarks for the year.

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."

Mississippi met ten of ten minimum standards for high-quality preschool education and spent \$2,298 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.

"Mississippi now meets all ten new minimum standards for high-quality preschool, but still ranks 42<sup>nd</sup> in access for 4-year-olds. And although Mississippi ranks 40<sup>th</sup> in state dollars per child, because of funding obtained from other sources, the state ranks 7<sup>th</sup> for total funding per child," Barnett said. "Now is the time to devote resources for expansion so more children have access to the program."

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).*

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

Met 10 of 10 quality standards benchmarks.

Enrolled 1,954 children, an increase of 114 from 2017-2018.

Total state funding was \$4,490,818, an increase of \$372,178 from 2017-2018 (inflation adjusted).

State spending-per-child was \$2,298, compared to \$2,238 in 2017-2018 (inflation adjusted).

Mississippi's national rankings:

- 42<sup>nd</sup> in access for 4-year-olds
- 41<sup>st</sup> in state spending per child