

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 22, 2020

Contact: Ernest Landante, Jr.
elandante@nieer.org
848-932-0770

New York Makes Uneven Progress Serving Preschool Children as COVID-19 Threatens *Within New York NYC Continues to Lead the Way in Access to High Quality Pre-K but will it continue?*

NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ — The COVID-19 pandemic is putting pre-K education at greater risk, including in the state of New York, which enrolls 54 percent of its 4-year-olds and two percent of its 3-year-olds in pre-K, according to a new report from the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER).

New York is among the nation's leaders in 4-year-old pre-K enrollment. Nationally, pre-K enrollment surpassed 1.6 million in the 2018-2019 academic year.

New York is one of nine states to serve more than half of its 4-year-olds. The state served more children and increased pre-K spending last year but spending per child failed to keep up with inflation. Now huge education budget cuts that include pre-K have been proposed in NYC due to COVID-19, and the rest of the state is at risk as well. Without federal assistance, quality and enrollment may be cut.

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."

New York met seven of ten minimum standards for high-quality preschool education and spent \$6,668 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.

"New York City has led the way for universal access to high-quality, full-day pre-K. Expansion of high quality pre-K is needed throughout the state," said Barnett. "New York City recently increased salaries for public pre-K teachers in community-based organizations but a stronger commitment to parity is required for all pre-K teachers."

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.

NEW YORK: 2018-19 FAST FACTS

Met seven of 10 quality standards benchmarks.

Enrolled 126,302 children, an increase of 4,730 from 2017-18.

Total state funding was \$842,225,288, an increase of \$17,033,873 from 2017-18 (inflation adjusted).

State spending-per-child was \$6,668, compared to \$6,788 in 2017-18 (inflation adjusted).

New York's national rankings:

- 9th in access for 4-year-olds
- 25th in access for 3-year-olds
- 13th in state spending per child