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**CONTACT: Ernest Landante, Jr.**

elandante@nieer.org

## **Michigan a Leader in Pre-K Quality Faces Challenges from the Pandemic and Longer-Term**

*Federal/State Partnership Needed to Better Serve Young Children and their Families*

NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ—The COVID-19 pandemic set back state preschool enrollment and funding across the country, according to the 2020 edition of *The State of Preschool Yearbook* by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) at the Rutgers Graduate School of Education.

Pre-pandemic, preschool enrollment and inflation-adjusted spending changed little. Michigan maintained pre-K standards despite the pandemic's budgetary and operational challenges, one of the few states to meet all 10 minimum standards for high-quality preschool, and even surpassing some.

Now is the time for a renewed commitment to high-quality pre-K for all, beginning with those in the lowest income families.

Nationally, the report found that:

- Growth in state-funded preschool was slowing before the pandemic.
- The pandemic imposed serious setbacks and reversed recent progress.
- Uneven progress among states is worsening inequality in children's access to high-quality preschool.
- Most states spend too little per child to support high-quality, full-day pre-K and few reach all their 3- and 4-year-olds.

"Michigan should be praised for its commitment to high standards for preschool," said Steven Barnett, Ph.D., NIEER's founder and senior co-director. "The state should increase investments to expand access to these strong programs and provide full school-day hours to even more young children."

Nationwide, enrollment in state-funded preschool increased slightly in 2019-2020, but took a hit in 2020-2021 as many programs closed or only offered virtual learning and parents were hesitant to send children to in-person school during the pandemic.

"Michigan is making plans now to mitigate the pandemic's impacts on young children and pre-K programs but at the same time it needs to recommit to long-term progress," said Barnett. "The federal government should provide support for, and states commit to, high-quality pre-K. Federal rescue and recovery dollars can help with immediate needs. NIEER proposes a new federal initiative to support long-term improvements that would bring \$229 million in federal support Michigan for preschool during the next four years."

Across the country the survey reveals bipartisan support for preschool with both "red" and "blue" states among the nation's leaders in high quality pre-K. That offers hope that the nation can move ahead to expand access to high-quality pre-K more rapidly in the future.

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

### **MICHIGAN: 2020 FAST FACTS**

Met 10 of 10 quality standards benchmarks.

Enrolled 37,368 children, an increase of 228 from 2018-19.

Total state funding was \$249,600,000, an increase of \$1,438,551 from 2018-19 (inflation adjusted).

State spending-per-child was \$6,680 compared to \$6,682 in 2018-19 (inflation adjusted).

Michigan national rankings:

- 21 in access for 4-year-olds
- 14 in state spending per child