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April 22, 2020

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Guam Makes Little Progress Providing Services for Preschool Children *Proposed Legislation Provides Hope for Future Expansion*

NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ — The COVID-19 pandemic is putting pre-K education at greater risk, including in Guam, which enrolls 2 percent of its 4-year-olds, according to a new report from the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER).

Guam trails the national average in 4-year-old pre-K enrollment but is the only U.S. territory to fund preschool. Nationally, pre-K enrollment surpassed 1.6 million in the 2018-2019 academic year.

Guam's small program enrollment has not changed since the program began, and both overall and per child spending have decreased. A resolution recently signed by the Guam Education Board would provide an infusion of funding to support 90 additional children, more than doubling enrollment.

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."

Guam met six of ten minimum standards for high-quality preschool education and spent \$4,901 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.

"The Guam Education Board is moving in the right direction to support increasing enrollment," said Barnett. "It remains to be seen whether Guam's legislature will approve proposed funding increases."

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.

GUAM: 2018-19 FAST FACTS

Met six of 10 quality standards benchmarks.

Enrolled 72 children, an increase of one child from 2017-18.

Total state funding was \$352,876 a decrease of \$23,078 from 2017-18 (inflation adjusted).

State spending-per-child was \$4,901 compared to \$5,295 in 2017-18 (inflation adjusted).