



## News Release

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### **Support Soars in Most States While Illinois Stumbles on the Path to Pre-K for All** *State's complex political environment results in unexpected shortfalls*

(Washington, DC) – The political wrangling that resulted in lower-than-expected pre-kindergarten funding in Illinois is examined in “Votes Count: Legislative Action on Pre-K Fiscal Year 2008,” a national report released today by Pre-K Now, a public education and advocacy organization. The annual state-by-state analysis of legislative support for pre-k across the country underscored Illinois’s departure from its standing in 2006, when lawmakers made pre-k history with a proposal to fund pre-k at \$40 million annually for three years.

“The Illinois legislature made a commitment last year to fully fund pre-k for all 3- and 4-year-olds by 2011,” said Libby Doggett, executive director of Pre-K Now. “While this year’s modest increase is certainly welcome, it does not keep the state up to date on that commitment.”

Illinois is among the 36 states – including eight which anticipate enrollment-based budget growth – that increased funding for pre-k, a number that breaks last year’s record of 34, and far exceeds the FY05 record of 15. A total of 528 million new dollars will allow at least 88,000 more children nationally to attend pre-k. Illinois is one of the seven states that are now providing or phasing in pre-k for all children.

Additional report findings include:

- Illinois’s *Preschool for All* program received an increase of \$22.3 million, totaling \$305.5 million;
- A total of \$4.8 billion will be spent by states in FY08 nationally—a \$2 billion increase in just three years;
- Just one state, Florida, decreased pre-k funding;
- Iowa and Pennsylvania had the highest increases at 241 and 135 percent, respectively; and
- Ten states still do not have pre-k programs, resulting in over 500,000 3- and 4-year-old children without access to quality, state-funded pre-k settings that have been proven to help all children.

“Illinois policymakers fought the good fight on behalf of pre-k this session,” said Maricela Garcia, executive director of Latinos United, a Pre-K Now partner based in Chicago. “Unfortunately, political and budget realities made it tough to reach our end goal.”

A PDF of the report can be accessed at: [www.preknow.org/documents/legislativereport\\_Sept2007.pdf](http://www.preknow.org/documents/legislativereport_Sept2007.pdf)

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*Pre-K Now collaborates with state advocates and policymakers to lead a movement for high-quality, voluntary pre-kindergarten for all three and four year olds. The following funders contribute to making this important work possible: The Pew Charitable Trusts, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the McCormick Tribune Foundation, the Foundation for Child Development, RGK Foundation, CityBridge Foundation, PNC Financial Services Group, and the Schumann Fund for New Jersey.*