

**For Immediate Release**

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**Illinois keeps with national trend with proposed increase in preschool funding**

Illinois is one of 27 states around the country that is keeping its commitment to young children by proposing to increase or hold steady preschool funding, according to a national analysis released Tuesday by Pre-K Now, a campaign of the Pew Center on the States.

On March 18, Gov. Quinn proposed a \$12.5 million increase to the Early Childhood Block Grant for the 2010 fiscal year, including \$11.1 million for Preschool for All, despite the state's \$12 billion budget deficit. The governor's proposed increase would bring total Preschool for All funding to \$349.6 million. Additional funding in the Early Childhood Block Grant will be dedicated to infant-toddler programs.

"In the current economic climate, we applaud the governor for showing his commitment to education for our youngest learners," said Diana Rauner, executive director of the Ounce of Prevention Fund. "Given that early learning programs result in substantial educational benefits for at-risk children and a return on investment to taxpayers, it is smart policy for Illinois to invest in preschool – even during a recession."

Illinois stands out among neighboring states in its fiscal commitment to preschool and other early childhood programs. Missouri and Michigan proposed flat funding their preschool programs next year, while Indiana offers no state-funded preschool.

"Because of the bipartisan support of our state leaders, Illinois has become a national leader in providing high-quality early childhood education and we must leverage that momentum by increasing funding each year to sustain and expand programs," Rauner said.

Preschool is one of the most well-researched public education strategies of the last forty years. The preponderance of evidence shows quality early education helps children succeed in school and in life, and results in savings for every dollar invested. Children who complete quality preschool programs enter school more prepared cognitively and socially, are less likely to be held back or need special education services, are more likely to complete high school, and become more successful and productive adults.

Pre-K Now's non-partisan annual report, "Leadership Matters: Governors' Pre-K Budget Proposals Fiscal Year 2010," evaluates state budget proposals for the next year to determine which governors count voluntary, high-quality preschool among their top education and economic development strategies. To view a copy of the report, visit [http://www.preknow.org/documents/LeadershipReport\\_May2009.pdf](http://www.preknow.org/documents/LeadershipReport_May2009.pdf).

*The Ounce of Prevention Fund gives children in poverty the best chance for success in school and in life by advocating for and providing the highest quality care and education from birth to age five.*

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