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GroundWork  
1226 Huron Road, Suite 300  
Cleveland, OH 44115

For more information, contact Katie Kelly  
(216) 781-2944 x105 or cell (216) 224-9554  
kkelly@groundworkohio.org

## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **NATIONAL STUDY FINDS OHIO CUTS TO PRE-KINDERGARTEN WORST IN NATION**

*With Difficult Budget Decisions, Most States Chose to Protect Pre-K*

Columbus, OH- Pre-K Now, a national non-partisan organization supporting high-quality, voluntary pre-kindergarten for all three- and four-year-old children, released a report yesterday detailing commitment in state budgets to pre-k as a top education reform strategy.

Unlike most states, Ohio made major cuts to pre-K education. According to the report, while many states were faced with budget cuts, most chose to protect pre-K. Twenty-eight states and the District of Columbia chose to increase or maintain funding for pre-kindergarten education. Legislators added dollars for existing pre-k initiatives in 13 states and approved new programs in two others, creating a modest national net gain in funding despite cuts in nine states.

Ohio's cut is estimated to deny pre-k to the largest number of children nationwide. The elimination of the Early Learning Initiative and the 33 percent reduction of Early Childhood Education, a pre-k program offered in public school districts, will eliminate early learning opportunities for over 12,000 Ohio children.

"Ohio lawmakers were faced with a number of difficult decisions in the most recent state budget. The cuts made to Ohio's early childhood system will result in many of our most at-risk children entering school without the tools they need to be successful, an outcome that will cost our state much more down the line," said Katie Kelly, Director of groundWork.

"Through a growing body of evidence, we know that children who participate in high-quality pre-k programs are significantly better equipped to succeed in school and in life. These children are less likely to be held back or need special education services, and more likely to complete high school and contribute to their community as adults," said Kelly.

Since the passage of the state budget in late July, many child care centers that housed Early Learning Initiative classrooms have shut their doors, further decreasing access to quality child care in many areas of the state. Official numbers on the centers that closed since July for financial reasons are due out by the end of the year.

groundWork is a coalition of early care and education leaders, parents, service professionals, business leaders, and organizations across the state who have come together to promote state investments and policies that will address the needs of Ohio's youngest children, including voluntary access to high-quality early care and education programs, assessment, screening, and treatment for social and emotional problems, increased access to health services and supports, and voluntary access to full-day kindergarten.

To learn more about groundWork, please visit [www.groundworkohio.org](http://www.groundworkohio.org).

"Votes Count: Legislative Action for Pre-K Fiscal Year 2010," reviews state budgets to see which legislatures understand the economic and educational value of high-quality, voluntary pre-k. The study shows that while the economy has forced lawmakers to evaluate budgets with unprecedented focus, states see pre-k as a core priority and are finding ways to fund it.

For more details about "Votes Count," please visit [www.pewcenteronthestates.org/preknow](http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org/preknow).

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