

a campaign of the
Pew Center on the States

News Release

For Immediate Release

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Pew Report: Despite Economic Crisis, Rhode Island Governor Makes Pre-Kindergarten a Priority for FY10

Carcieri budget puts state on course to join national movement toward voluntary pre-k

WASHINGTON, DC—(May 5, 2009)— Rhode Island Gov. Don Carcieri is one of three governors proposing new pre-kindergarten initiatives in their FY10 budgets, according to a state-by-state analysis released today by Pre-K Now, a campaign of the Pew Center on the States.

“If this proposal is passed, we’d be taking a big step toward joining states across the country in the movement to develop high-quality pre-k opportunities,” said executive director of Rhode Island Kids Count Elizabeth Burke Bryant. “Not only will this help to close the achievement gap at kindergarten entry for our most vulnerable children, it will help to strengthen the state’s economic future.”

The non-partisan annual report, “Leadership Matters: Governors’ Pre-K Budget Proposals Fiscal Year 2010,” evaluates budget proposals for the next year and governors’ remarks in recent state of the state addresses to determine which leaders count voluntary, high-quality pre-k among their top education and economic development strategies. The findings underscore a growing interest among federal and state policy makers in targeting limited public resources to effective programs backed by research. This year’s report also addresses federal action, such as the Obama administration’s inclusion of funding proposals for early education in the stimulus package.

Even as they confront significant economic challenges and whittle spending to core priorities, the majority of the nation’s governors are increasing or protecting state investments in pre-k programs in the coming fiscal year.

The report spotlights Gov. Carcieri’s proposal to fund a new Rhode Island Pre-K Demonstration Project, along with a rigorous evaluation during the initiative’s first year of operation to ensure that any expansion efforts are informed by evidence. The Demonstration Project, if approved, would be Rhode Island’s first state-funded pre-k program. In contrast, governors in nine other states without state-funded early education programs chose not to invest in evidence-based pre-k,

decisions that limit parents' choices and diminish young children's chances to start school ready to succeed.

"The fact that the current economic situation hasn't prevented Governor Carcieri from taking this important first step shows he recognizes the wisdom of investing in early education," said Danielle M. Gonzales, project manager of Pre-K Now. "His leadership will not only make an impact on the state's young children and families in the short term, but also will produce significant economic returns for years to come."

Key findings include:

- Fourteen governors are proposing to increase investment in early education.
- Thirteen governors are proposing to "flat-fund" early education programs, preserving current investment levels.
- In addition to Gov. Carcieri, the governors of Alaska, North Dakota – states that currently do not provide state-funded pre-k – are proposing new pre-k initiatives.
- The governors of Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina and South Carolina proposed a cut in pre-k investments.
- Total proposed state investment in pre-k is four percent greater than FY09 appropriations (which were \$5.2 billion in 43 states and the District of Columbia).
- If passed, these proposals would bring total state pre-k funding to \$5.4 billion in 43 states and the District of Columbia in FY10.
- Facing one of the biggest budget shortfalls in the country, New Jersey Governor Jon Corzine is calling for a 14 percent increase in pre-k investment, including the creation of an "incentive fund" to encourage school districts' use of federal recovery funds to expand pre-k.

Pre-k 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 pre-k 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.

To view a copy of the report and learn more about the early education initiatives of the Pew Center on the States, please visit www.preknow.org or www.pewcenteronthestates.org.

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The Pew Center on the States identifies and advances state policy solutions. Pre-K Now, a campaign of the Pew Center on the States, collaborates with advocates and policymakers to lead a movement toward high-quality, voluntary pre-kindergarten for all three and four year olds.