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Investing in High Quality Pre-Kindergarten Programs Would Create  
Significant Government Savings Over Time  
According to an Economic Policy Institute Report.

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**Rhode Island KIDS COUNT**

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PROVIDENCE, RI, May 3, 2007 – Rhode Island KIDS COUNT announced the release today of a new study from the Economic Policy Institute, *Enriching Children, Enriching the Nation: Public Investment in High-Quality Prekindergarten* by economist Robert G. Lynch. Lynch's research shows that increased government investments in high quality pre-kindergarten programs for the nation's children would yield a stronger economy, increased earnings, reduced crime, and balanced government budgets.

Lynch's research shows, state-by-state and nationally, the social, economic, and budgetary gains that would flow from investing now to build either a universal or a targeted pre-K program. His research is based on data from the Chicago Child-Parent center program, which provides center-based, comprehensive education, and family support services to economically disadvantaged children from prekindergarten (ages three or four) to elementary school (up to grade three/age nine). It is the oldest federally funded pre-kindergarten program in the nation after Head Start.

Lynch predicts that a fully-funded pre-K program for the most at-risk children in Rhode Island would begin to yield a state budget surplus in just 9 years and by the year 2050 would generate \$929 million in total budgetary, crime and earnings benefits. In the year 2050, he shows that the total benefits of a targeted pre-K program for 3- and 4-year old Rhode Island children would be nearly 12 times as high as its costs.

Lynch's study also indicates that a fully-funded, universal pre-Kindergarten program for all 3- and 4-year olds in Rhode Island has the potential to yield \$2.3 billion in total benefits for the state in the year 2050.

"Investing in high-quality pre-K isn't only good for children, it's also great for government budgets," said Lynch, whose new study measures the economic, crime and budgetary benefits of high quality pre-K against its costs. "Governments can realize huge savings in areas such as remedial education, law enforcement, and child welfare, and will experience increases in tax revenues. Add to that the benefits of less crime and a more highly skilled workforce that is more likely to be employed and better paid – and that makes pre-K spending one of the smartest moves governments can make."

According to U.S. Census Bureau data presented in the 2007 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook, nearly 20% of Rhode Island's children lived below the federal poverty threshold in 2005. Rhode Island ranks 35<sup>th</sup> in the nation and last in New England for the percentage of children living in poverty. Research consistently shows that children living in poverty, especially those in poverty for extended periods of time, are likely to enter Kindergarten with inadequate social and cognitive skills, to experience high rates of academic failure and grade retention throughout school, and to drop out of school. Children who grow up in poverty are more likely to have employment problems and reduced earnings as adults.

Research has also shown that when young children are enrolled in very high-quality, intensive early childhood educational interventions, like the Chicago Child-Parent Center Program or the North Carolina Abecedarian Project, many of the educational disparities can be ameliorated and children from low income families are more likely to achieve success.

Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT stated, "Lynch's study provides a valuable economic analysis of the long-term costs and benefits of investing in early care and education programs. Rhode Island is known nationally as a leader in creating and supporting an effective child care subsidy program for low-income working families. However, the proposed state budget cuts put this subsidy program at risk. Child care subsidies serve as the foundation for low income children to access pre-kindergarten programs in Rhode Island. We need to maintain our support for the subsidy program and, in the long-run, identify new revenues to ensure low income children have consistent access to high-quality pre-kindergarten

programs. We also need to develop systems and supports to assure early care and education programs are reaching the quality standards necessary to generate real cognitive and social gains for children.”

ECONOMIC POLICY INSTITUTE EMBARGOED DOCUMENTS (all materials embargoed until May 3, 12:01 AM) are available at [www.epi.org/docs/news/lynch](http://www.epi.org/docs/news/lynch) [username: release password: embargo]. Materials include an advance copy of the book, a fact sheet, and state-by-state tables on benefits from both a universal pre-K program for all three- and four-year-olds and one targeted to the poorest children. **A national news conference call is being held on Wednesday, May 2 at 12:00 noon with author Robert Lynch.** See the original email to RSVP for the national news conference call.

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The **Economic Policy Institute** is an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan research institute that researches the impact of economic trends and policies on working people in the United States and around the world.

**Rhode Island KIDS COUNT** is a statewide children’s policy organization that works to improve the health, economic well-being, education, safety and development of Rhode Island children.