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CONNECTICUT CAN CREATE SAFE ENVIRONMENTS FOR 15,000 YOUNG CHILDREN TO LEARN AND GROW

*New study recommends how state can reach goals without shortchanging kids or
breaking the bank*

A new study, released today by the Children's Investment Partnership, found that investing \$17 million a year will provide the facilities necessary to close the entire 15,000- gap in classroom spaces that is currently limiting the growth of preschool in Connecticut.

"Investments in quality early education facilities will keep paying dividends to the tax payer as these children move successfully through public school and into adulthood," said Larry McHugh, President of the Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce and Chair of the Connecticut State University Board of Trustees.

This investment offers one of the "highest returns the taxpayer can enjoy," said David Watson, Vice President of J.P Morgan Chase & Co., citing research by the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis and others.

"Children who participate in a strong preschool program are more likely to succeed in school, are more likely to hold a job, and commit fewer crimes," said David Wasch, director of CIP and one of the study's authors. "But the state has estimated that 15,000 3- and 4-year-old children are still in need of a quality education."

CIP, a program of the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), studied six years of data on the state's two preschool construction programs – the Department of Education's *School Construction Grant Program* and the *Tax-Exempt Financing Program of the Child Care Facilities Loan Fund*, administered by the Connecticut Health and Educational Facilities Authority (CHEFA), with the Department of Social Services (DSS). It found that by building up to an annual investment of \$17 million per year, the state can erase its 15,000-space shortage in five to seven years.

"The two financing programs have already demonstrated success, developing 3,000 high quality spaces for early education programs in three years," said David Nee, executive director of the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund, a family foundation working to improve school success for children from birth to age eight. "And CIP has been instrumental in helping early childhood centers to grow. Connecticut is fortunate to have the expertise and experience already in place that we will need in the future to expand the

number and quality of spaces so that preschool can be available to all families who want it.”

Many preschool programs are run out of basements or other inappropriate spaces for children, lacking natural light and adequate air circulation. From 1997-2000, the state developed 3,000 high quality spaces for early education through the Tax-Exempt Financing Program. Spaces have also been developed through the Department of Education’s School Construction Grant Program.

The report contains a series of recommendations for how the state can further strengthen these financing programs as it expands its early education system, by providing facility expansion funds to high quality programs; offering technical assistance on facilities development and design; and ensuring that state-funded facilities continue to provide good outcomes for children over time.

The report is being delivered to Governor M. Jodi Rell, as well as the legislative leaders and chairs of key committees as they consider funding priorities for the approaching biennium. Governor Rell has indicated a commitment to preschool expansion by including funds for preschool development in her budget.