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**National Grant Competition Aimed at Expanding High-Quality Services to Families with Infants and Toddlers Receives Overwhelming Response from States in Support of Local Solutions**

*Pritzker Children's Initiative awards Planning Grants to establish actionable prenatal-to-three policy agendas in eleven states across the country*

CHICAGO, IL— April 15, 2019 – Today, the Pritzker Children's Initiative (PCI) announced the winners of Planning Grants under its Prenatal-to-Age-Three State Grant Competition, a significant and critical part of PCI's strategy aimed at expanding high-quality services nationally to at least one million more low-income families with infants and toddlers by 2023. Research shows that a child's brain develops faster in the first three years than at any later period of life, building the foundation for all future learning, behavior and health. PCI developed this grant competition to identify and empower states with a strategic, actionable vision for supporting healthy child development of infants and toddlers. The states chosen to receive the grant presented bold and innovative ideas to put this country's youngest children on a path for future success in school and life. Those awarded grants are: Arkansas, District of Columbia, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Nebraska, Nevada, Pennsylvania, Texas, Washington and Wisconsin.

Recipients of the grants have each been awarded \$100,000 to establish a coalition of state- and community-level partners inside and outside government to develop an ambitious prenatal-to-three policy agenda and action plan, focused on expanding access to high-quality programs designed to support children's healthy development and build a strong foundation for future learning. These Planning Grant recipients will also be eligible for Implementation Grants based on the quality of the plan they develop over the next six to nine months.

"This competition marks an important moment for us. We were well aware of the growing need to support infants and toddlers and their families, but were stunned by the enormous interest and bold thinking by states to significantly expand services to children in their earliest years," said Janet Froetscher, president of the J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation. "Based on the exciting and thoughtful proposals we received, it is abundantly clear that state leaders truly understand that the foundation for all future learning, health and behavior is built in the first years of life. State leaders from across the country have delivered us a message on the importance of supporting the newest residents of their states and we hear them loud and clear. We are delighted to be partnering with these states and look forward to learning with them."

By the February deadline, 42 of 44 eligible states plus the District of Columbia submitted applications identifying strategies to expand high-quality early childhood services through innovative and collaborative efforts. Those states that weren't eligible for this competition were those where the foundation is already working with stakeholders to bring forward a coordinated prenatal-to-three agenda – California, Illinois, New York, North Carolina, Ohio and Oregon.

The unprecedented interest and clear demand from the field indicates both the need and growing momentum around investing in prenatal-to-three efforts that will support families. Due to the overwhelming demand and quality of the proposals submitted, PCI will also support continued planning work in three additional states that are showing great promise: New Mexico, New Jersey and South Carolina.

“This grant competition has illuminated the nation’s commitment and desire to support infants and toddlers,” said Gerry Cobb, director of PCI. “The most promising applications described approaches that build on locally-driven efforts, address issues of inequity and maximize the best practices across child care, health, early childhood education and human services to address new challenges facing infants, toddlers and their families.”

Cobb emphasized that those receiving Planning Grants all demonstrated their ability to bring together public and private partners to address specific needs and challenges facing infants and toddlers and their families in their states.

Research shows that when we invest in the first three years of a child’s life, children start kindergarten ready to thrive and the returns for the state are the highest, reducing the need for more expensive interventions later. With an estimated 3 million of the nation’s youngest children at risk of reaching kindergarten unprepared for school, collectively, these states will work to drive significant investments in improving kindergarten readiness nationwide.

In addition to the economic benefits, high-quality early childhood development programs can reduce chronic disease and health care costs, and their benefits include better education outcomes and higher incomes as adults. Healthy development in early childhood helps prepare children for the educational experiences of kindergarten and beyond. When infants and toddlers get what their growing brains need, they become healthy kids who are confident, empathetic and ready for school and life.

Coordinating with on-the-ground leaders in states and communities has proven to be an effective strategy to reach and support families with infants and toddlers. This is why PCI is supporting state and local collaboratives to lead the way in developing and strengthening prenatal-to-age-three policy agendas and action plans based on the unique challenges facing communities in each state. To ensure the innovations, policies and best practices developed in state coalitions are shared and effectively implemented, grant winners will also join the PCI-funded [National Collaborative for Infants and Toddlers \(NCIT\)](#). Through critical community-based approaches and a shared commitment to the healthy development of our youngest children, NCIT can invest deeper in state and local programs and policies across the country.

### **About the Pritzker Children’s Initiative (PCI)**

*The Pritzker Children’s Initiative (PCI), a project of the J.B. and M. K. Pritzker Family Foundation, is committed to building a promising future for our country by investing in and supporting solutions in early*

*childhood development for children prenatal-to-age-three, with the goal of every child reaching kindergarten ready to learn. More information about PCI can be found [here](#).*

**About the National Collaborative for Infants and Toddlers (NCIT)**

*The National Collaborative for Infants and Toddlers (NCIT) is committed to advancing policies and programs that ensure families have the support they need to give their infants and toddlers the foundation for a strong start in life. Funded by the Pritzker Children’s Initiative, a program of the J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation, this effort brings together national partners, early childhood leaders, policymakers and practitioners inside and outside state and local government to create and strengthen promising policies and programs and share what works so that more states and communities can support the healthy development of our youngest children. More information about NCIT can be found [here](#).*