

# INVESTING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN MAINE

**Teachers know it.**

**Business leaders see it.**

**Brain scientists and economists have proven it.**

*Children who participate in high quality early learning programs in the first years of life develop the cognitive and character skills that drive future success in school, health and career. Because all of the learning and development that happens later in life is based on the foundations established in the early years, smart investments during early childhood pay off not only for children and their families, but for taxpayers, as well. Here's how expanding access to high quality early childhood education is a solution to issues facing Maine families:*



## Early Childhood Education Brings Economic Return

Investing in early childhood education is a fiscally responsible way to reduce deficits and create surpluses, now and in the future. Trying to change behavior or build new skills on a shaky foundation is far more costly and less effective than ensuring strong foundations from the beginning. That's why it isn't surprising that funding high quality early childhood education provides taxpayers with returns of 7-10 percent per year for every dollar invested, based on reduced costs in remedial education, health, justice system expenditures and the tax revenues generated by increased earnings.



## *Early Investment Works*



Birth-to-5 early childhood education for disadvantaged children more than pays for itself by preventing the achievement gap and producing better outcomes in education, health, personal productivity and economic vitality. Nobel Prize Laureate economist James Heckman has shown that investing in the early development of disadvantaged children, starting at birth, creates more highly skilled, valuable and productive adults who contribute to society and do not require increased social spending to make up for deficits in skills and functioning.

## **Early Childhood Education Builds a Strong Workforce**

Quality early childhood development from birth to age 5 is critical to making sure every child has the foundational skills for success in the 21st century. Today's economy requires more than knowledge – it requires the character skills to work with others and put knowledge into use. Early childhood education provides critical skill development – impulse control, persistence, sociability and teamwork – that boosts cognitive achievement, understanding and productivity. If we want smarter, more capable children who are prepared for the rigors of school, college and a competitive workforce, early childhood education is the best place to start.

## **Early Childhood Education Strengthens Families**

Economic pressures on families have changed, and with 69 percent of Maine children under the age of 6 having both parents needing to work to make ends meet, families need more resources available to help them care for their children. Investments in early childhood education programs, including home visiting programs, Early Head Start, Head Start, and public preschool empower parents to make choices that create stronger families at home and give them the education and skills they need to help their children meet developmental milestones. Home visiting programs can also assist parents in navigating a path to self-sufficiency by helping them quickly return to school or the workforce without sacrificing their child's early development.



## Early Childhood Education Leads to a Healthier Maine

While high quality early learning has already demonstrated positive impacts through school and life, a recent analysis of the Abecedarian preschool program, one of the oldest and most cited U.S. early childhood intervention programs, showed positive effects even on adult health. Research by James Heckman and his colleagues found that children who attended a quality early childhood program that included strong foundations for health and nutrition lowered the risk of heart disease, diabetes and hypertension in adult males and reduced obesity in adult women. Fighting chronic disease and improving the health of the state can be efficiently done through relatively small investments in early childhood education.



## Early Childhood Education is a Nonpartisan Issue that the Public Widely Supports

A recent bipartisan national poll shows overwhelming support for early childhood education, with 71 percent of voters – including 60 percent of Republicans – supporting greater investment in early childhood education. While 60 percent of Maine's 172 school districts offer some kind of pre-kindergarten program, the state only serves 34 percent of its four-year-olds, and many communities are unable to afford to offer a program to children. While \$4 million in funds from casino revenues approved by the Legislature will help districts with startup costs on voluntary preschool programs this year, additional support will allow Maine to provide greater quality and access to its programs and ensure that all Maine children get a strong start in life. Elected officials can make a bigger difference by making wise investments in early childhood education.

