



## Invest Early for 2020 Building the Foundation for Maine's Future

Maine's unique quality of life is important to us and we want to preserve it for our children. We want to make sure they have the opportunity to live, work and raise their families here. Yet, given the stressors of our economy and the challenges currently facing so many Maine families, the future of our state and our children is in doubt.

The question before us is what can we do today to guarantee the future prosperity of our state's economy and its quality of life?

The answer lies with young children. Maine's future prosperity rests squarely on the well-being and success of its youngest children.

### How Our Brains are Wired

Like building a house, the architecture of the developing brain sets the foundation for lifelong learning, behavior and health. Learning is faster, more effortless and more fun than it will ever be again.

### How Development is Disrupted

Learning how to cope with difficulty is an important part of healthy development.

Toxic stress like domestic violence, child abuse, and chronic poverty damages the wiring of young brains. Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are major risk factors for the leading causes of death, illness and poor quality of life.

### The Challenge for Maine

#### The Economy and Maine's Youngest Children

Nearly half of Maine's youngest children are low income, even if their parents are working. The majority of Maine's families with young children need child care to work.

#### School Readiness for Maine Students

In Maine, a lack of early skill development is a problem for many students. Each year, about four out of ten students entering kindergarten arrive unprepared.

By 4th grade, 30% of Maine students can't read at the basic level, and a disturbing 67% can't read at a proficient level. The rates are even higher for low-income children. By 11th grade, 52% are not proficient readers and 54% are not proficient in math.

### Invest Now for the Greatest Returns

Experts struggle with how to improve high school and college graduation rates.

Children who tend to need remedial education, drop out of school, experience emotional and mental health problems, and/or engage in criminal behavior tend not to have had high quality early education experiences. These negative outcomes are a significant cost to Maine.

We need our youngest citizens to grow up strong, vital and prepared for the workforce.

## Setting the Course for Maine's Youngest Children

The future of our economy and the quality of life in Maine depend on the success of our children. Evidence-based, tried and tested vital programs and services give many children the opportunity to succeed; they deserve our continued support. Getting things right the first time is easier and less costly than trying to fix them later.

That's why the Maine Children's Growth Council is focused on how to best promote the healthy development of our youngest children. Council goals include:

**Ensure access to family support and prevention programs** such as Maine Families home visiting services, parenting education, and other home-based services. Home visiting and parenting education enable parents and other caregivers to develop the skills that foster their child's healthy development and school readiness.

**Ensure access to early care and education programs that are high-quality, inclusive and affordable.** Support child development in child care centers, family child care homes and Head Start.



*The Voice for Early Childhood*

To request the complete report,  
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