

March 9, 2015

Hon. Senator James Hamper, Chair
Hon. Representative Margaret Rotundo, Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs

Hon. Senator Eric Brakey, Chair
Hon. Representative Andrew Gattine, Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

Maine State Legislature
c/o Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

RE: Written testimony in opposition to proposed cuts to early child care and education

Dear Senator Hamper, Representative Rotundo, Senator Brakey, Representative Gattine, and members of the joint standing committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Health and Human Services:

The Maine Center for Economic Policy (MECEP) would like to express its support for a strong, comprehensive early care and education system in Maine as an essential component to our state's economic development strategy.

We now know that children with access to early care and education are, in later life, more apt to go to college, are better skilled to meet business hiring needs, and earn more. They are less apt to live in poverty, require special education or social support programs, or become engaged with the criminal justice system. Research shows that quality early care and education provides long term benefits to the children being served and to the larger community. Studies indicate an economic return on investment of 7-9:1 from state dollars invested in our children through these programs.

There are four state programs that comprise a comprehensive early child care and education system: professional home visiting care for new parents, quality child care, fully-funded Head Start, and universal pre-K education. Unfortunately, pending budget and legislative proposals fail to invest adequately in these programs, leave federal dollars on the table, and shift existing funding to other state programs.

Based on research conducted by MECEP last year, we can document the that vital funding for Head Start and child care services not only helps thousands of Maine children and families, but also injects money into our economy. Two million dollars of state Head Start funds will garner another \$3 million in federal funds for a total investment in Maine children of \$5 million. These dollars in turn will support between 110 and 140 jobs and generate approximately \$8 million in economic activity for our state.

We urge you to invest in these programs. It makes sense for Maine families and for Maine's economy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Garrett Martin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "G" and a long, sweeping underline.

Garrett Martin
Executive Director