

Portland Press Herald Maine Sunday Telegram

March 13, 2009

I want to publicly thank Sens. Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins for their brave bipartisan leadership on the recently enacted America Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

They knew that federal action is needed to bolster the weakening economy and to stop the flow of job losses. While not perfect, the job creation, support for America's businesses, tax reductions, targeted investments, infrastructure funding and support for state governments are sorely needed here in Maine and across our nation.

I am also pleased to see that this economic stimulus packet included substantial increased investment in Head Start, Early Head Start and child care. As a member of the new Maine Children's Growth Council, I have learned just how important high-quality early care and education programs are if we want Maine's youngest citizens to grow up to be successful.

High-quality early education programs prepare children for academic success and help them develop skills necessary for their personal and later career development.

Children who lack early learning experiences are more likely to struggle academically, drop out of school, be arrested, become teen parents and abuse illegal drugs – all serious disqualifiers for successful careers.

High-quality early education is also cost-effective, saving taxpayers up to \$16 for every dollar invested.

Sens. Collins and Snowe have been longtime leaders on early childhood issues in Congress.

Maine and our nation owe them our appreciation for their understanding and leadership.

Dana F. Connors

President, Maine Chamber of Commerce

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