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Early learning programs worth their weight in gold

Not only will early learning programs have well-recognized, long-term economic benefits, these programs will, in fact, significantly increase sales of local goods and services today across the state.

According to the business leaders' organization, America's Edge, investments in quality early learning will generate as much or more in new sales as investments in construction, manufacturing, transportation or utilities, while creating much-needed jobs. In fact, every \$1 invested in early learning will generate almost \$2 in total sales for Maine businesses.

Quality early learning will also help us ensure we have a workforce with the 21st-century skills businesses need.

Children who participate in high-quality early learning programs are significantly more likely to enter school with the underlying skills needed to succeed in school and later in the workforce. These programs increase language skills, lower the need for special education, and increase graduation rates – by as much as 44 percent.

Given the positive, short-term impact early learning has, I urge Maine policy makers to prioritize early learning as a very real economic sector in our state that will help jumpstart our economy and build the foundation for sustained economic security.

John Peters

President, Downeast Energy

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