



April 13, 2010

The Honorable Susan M. Collins
413 Dirksen Senate Office Building
U.S. Senate Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Collins:

We are writing on behalf of America's Edge, a national nonprofit organization of business leaders, including over 50 members from Maine, who work to strengthen businesses through proven investments in children. We thank you for your leadership on investments in kids that boost our local economy and create jobs, while building a foundation on which economic security can be built. As business leaders, we know that among the most powerful tools available to protect the competitive edge of American businesses in a global marketplace are high-quality investments in kids.

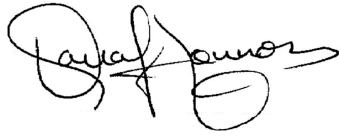
Research confirms that Head Start, Early Head Start, and high-quality child care increase sales of local goods and services by nearly \$2 for every \$1 invested. They also create jobs, increase workforce productivity, and help attract the skilled employees we will need in Maine when our state economy begins to recover. These programs will also ensure a highly-skilled future workforce by increasing a child's preparedness to enter and succeed in school, increasing graduation rates, and increasing the earnings these children will earn as adults. In fact, the long-term return on investment of \$16 for every \$1 invested from these programs cannot be matched by almost any other public investment we can make.

Yet, despite these proven benefits, the unmet need for Head Start, Early Head Start, and the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) is enormous. Nationally, Head Start serves less than half of eligible, low-income kids, while Early Head Start serves fewer than 5 percent of eligible infants and toddlers. CCDBG is able to help only 1 in 7 kids from eligible low-income families receive quality child care. Here in Maine, 86 percent of our 3-year-olds and 61 percent of our 4-year-olds are not enrolled in state pre-k programs, Head Start, or early childhood special education programs. We hope you will continue to be a champion for increased funding for Head Start, Early Head Start, CCDBG, and other proposed early learning programs, ensuring more children have access to these programs that are good for Maine businesses.

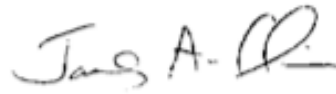
We hope you will be our champion on the Appropriations Committee for including additional Head Start, Early Head Start, and CCDBG funding as well as funding for newly proposed early education initiatives. Specifically, we urge you to work with Chairmen Inouye and Harkin to include an additional \$1 billion in funding, above current FY2010 levels, for Head Start and Early Head Start as well as an additional \$1 billion in funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant.

In this very tough economic climate, as business leaders, we know that a critical way to strengthen businesses and our economy today while ensuring long-term economic growth is through proven investments in children, we will stand with you as you push for enactment of these investments that are critical to the revitalization of Maine's economy.

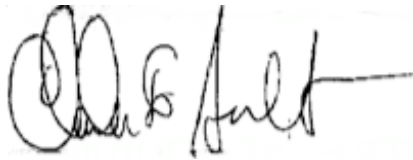
Sincerely,



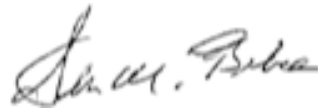
Dana F. Connors
President, Maine Chamber of Commerce



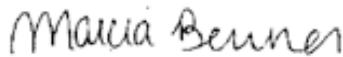
James A. Clair
CEO, Goold Health Systems



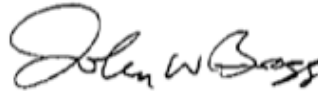
Charles F. Ault
Vice President, Border Trust



Severin M. Beliveau
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Marcia Benner
Vice President, Damariscotta Bank & Trust Co.



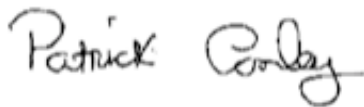
John W. Bragg
President, N.H. Bragg and Sons



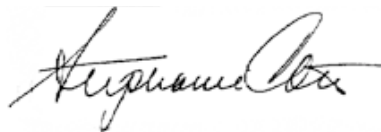
Susan Chaar
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Senior Vice President, Camden National Bank



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Stephanie Cotsirilos,
Attorney, Orono



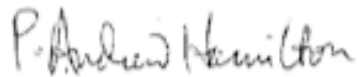
Robert Davis
CFO, Border Trust



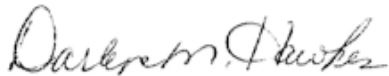
Nelson E. Durgin
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Rudy Graf
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P. Andrew Hamilton
Attorney, Eaton Peabody



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Marketing Manager, Merrill Bank, A Division of People's United Bank



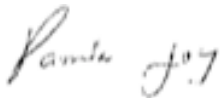
Jon Hiltz
Financial Planner, Baystate Financial Services



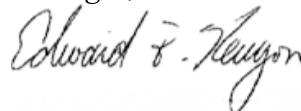
Michael Hopkins
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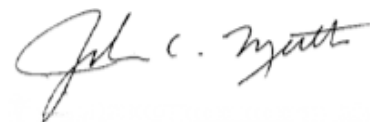
Nicholas Knobil
CFO, Precast Concrete



Charles A. Morrison
President, Androscoggin County Chamber of Commerce



Steve Musica
Vice President of Operations, FHC, Inc.



John C. Muth
Vice President, Camden National Bank



John Peters
President, Downeast Energy



John M. Rohman
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Brad Ryder
Owner, Epic Sports



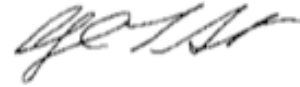
Dan Tremble
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Shawn Yardley,
Director, City of Bangor Health and Community Services



George L. Reichert
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Cheryl Lee Rust
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