April 13, 2010

The Honorable Olympia J. Snowe
154 Russell Senate Office Building
U.S. Senate Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Snowe:

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 its 3-year-olds and 61 percent of its 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.

When reauthorization of the CCDBG program begins to move forward, whether this year or next, we hope you will be our champion on the Finance Committee for increased mandatory funding for the programs it covers. We also hope that you will support increased appropriations for Head Start, Early Head Start, and CCDBG, as well as funding for high quality early care and education initiatives.

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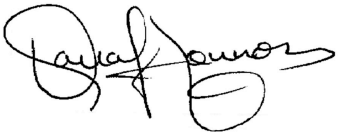
In this very tough economic climate, as business leaders, we know that a critical way to strengthen businesses and our economy today while ensuring long-term economic growth is through proven investments in children, we will stand with you with you as you push for enactment of these investments that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

Sincerely,



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Charles F. Ault
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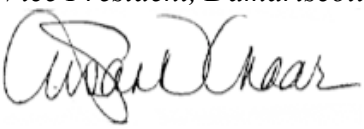

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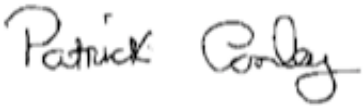

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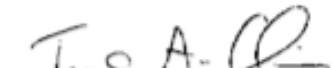

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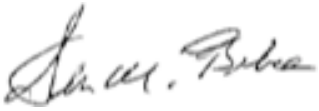

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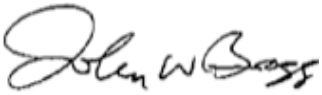

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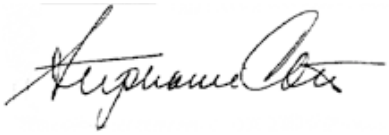

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