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MAINE STATE CHAMBER AND EDUCATE MAINE RELEASE POLICY BRIEF ON STRATEGIES TO BUILD A STRONG FOUNDATION FOR MAINE STUDENTS

Starting All Students with a Strong Educational Foundation Early in Life is Sound Economic Development for Maine

AUGUSTA, ME – The Maine State Chamber of Commerce and Educate Maine released a policy brief today (www.mainechamber.org/earlychildhooded) outlining five strategies (including 9 actions) to ensure Maine students receive a strong early childhood foundation that prepares them to succeed in learning and in life. The “A Strong Foundation for Maine” brief is the third in a series of policy briefs designed to achieve the goals laid out in Educate Maine’s “Education Indicators for Maine” report.

The goal of the five strategies and nine actions in “A Strong Foundation for Maine” is to ensure all Maine students receive a strong developmental foundation in early childhood that allows them to succeed in school and prepares them for success in their careers as adults. There are few investments that have the same proven return on investment as those in the development and health of our youngest people. Maine’s business community sees the value in these investments and wants to ensure all Maine children have every opportunity to succeed in life. They know this to be a particularly effective strategy in leveling the playing field for economically disadvantaged students, closing achievement gaps before they form.

“Too many of our students enter school trailing their peers and have to fight to catch up, falling short of their full potential,” said Maine State Chamber of Commerce President Dana Connors. “We are confident the early childhood strategies and actions outlined in this policy brief will help to make sure all Maine kids get the same opportunities to succeed and grow our communities and economy.”

“On average, half of Maine’s students come from low-income households and don’t enjoy the same benefits or realize the same success as their higher income peers,” said Ed Cervone, executive director of Educate Maine. “If Maine wants to get serious about closing these achievement gaps and provide real opportunities for every student, we cannot ignore the important developmental time of early childhood, and must make the investments in research-based programs and practices proven to provide them with a strong foundation for success.”

The five strategies identified in the report are 1) increase access to and participation in quality early education opportunities, 2) improve the quality of early childhood programs and offerings, 3) align early childhood programs with elementary school programs, 4) maintain healthy physical environments for positive brain development, 5) and look to examples in other states for reaching students earlier in their lives. The 9 actions under those strategies are a focused list of best practices that will help achieve these goals.

The “A Strong Foundation for Maine” policy brief can be found online at www.mainechamber.org/earlychildhooded.

For more information on Educate Maine’s “Education Indicators for Maine” report, please go to www.educatemaine.org.

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About the Maine State Chamber of Commerce...

As the state’s most influential business advocate, the Maine State Chamber of Commerce works to ensure a business climate in which Maine State Chamber members, large and small, can compete successfully in the local, regional, national, and world marketplaces. As The Voice of Maine Business, the Maine State Chamber of Commerce proudly represents a network of 5,000 businesses of all sectors, sizes, and regions. It advocates on their behalf daily before the Legislature, state departments, and various levels of state government.

About Educate Maine...

Educate Maine is a business-led education advocacy organization whose mission is to champion college and career readiness and to increase the education attainment of all Maine people. All Maine students should graduate from high school prepared to succeed in postsecondary education and in the workplace, and the number of Maine people with a college degree, a postsecondary certificate, or a professional credential must increase to meet the demands of the economy.