

Dear Readers,

Start early and invest now in Maine's young children and their families. This message is spreading across the state, from the November 2007 Governor's Summit on Early Childhood to this issue of *Maine Policy Review*, which tackles issues related to early childhood in Maine. The key word here is "early." Children's experiences during their first five years are critical because so much brain development is taking place. Failure to "invest early" in young children can lead to increased societal and individual costs in terms of decreased productivity, poorer health, increased crime, and other negative consequences. Yet, we as a society place a low priority on allocating resources to support young children and their families.

Guest editors Leslie Forstadt and Sheryl Peavey introduce the issue by giving a firsthand look at the resources available for parents and young children. The articles that follow address important topics related to Maine's young children and their families: the social and economic importance of investing in early childhood development (Philip A. Trostel; Dana F. Connors; Judy Reidt-Parker); family economic security (Ann Acheson); children's health (Dora Anne Mills); children with disabilities or special needs and their parents (Alan B. Cobo-Lewis; Helen D. Ward, Julie A. Atkins and Erin E. Oldham); young English language learners (Oldham, Atkins and Ward); child care (Michael Lahti, Rachel Connelly, Georgia N. Nigro and Rebecca Fraser-Thill; Julie DellaMattera); parent education (Candace J. Eaton); and families and children affected by exposure to drugs, alcohol and other risk factors (Beth Logan et al.; Marjorie Withers).

Producing this issue has been a highly collaborative process. Guest editors Leslie Forstadt, child and family development specialist with University of Maine Cooperative Extension, and Sheryl Peavey, director of Maine's Early Childhood Initiative, Department of Health and Human Services, recruited a group of highly knowledgeable authors. We are very appreciative that they proposed this issue, and for their active role in seeing it through to its fruition. We would also like to thank several organizations that provided additional financial support for the production and more widespread distribution of this issue: The Bingham Program, Maine Children's Trust, United Ways of Maine, and the Maine Children's Alliance.

We hope this issue opens your eyes about the critically important early childhood period and the policies and resources that affect parents and young children.

Best,


