READY NATION
COUNCIL FOR A STRONG AMERICA
MAINE

July 28, 2020

Dear Governor Mills,

First, we want to thank you for your recent decision to spend $8.4 million from the federal CARES Act relief funds to support our critical child care sector. Two of the lessons learned from our pandemic experience created by the novel COVID-19 virus are that child care is an essential underpinning of Maine's economy, and that it should be supported in a way that reflects its economic importance.

Today we are writing as members of ReadyNation, a nonprofit organization that includes more than 100 Maine business leaders committed to working to strengthen businesses across our state and our economy through proven investments focused on Maine's youngest children. We write to ask you to support additional needed investments in our child care workforce.

When the pandemic hit Maine, 73 percent of all Maine children under age six had all available parents or guardians in the workforce. We can only return to that place if we support the child care teachers needed so working parents can go back to work. Parents need safe, high-quality child care that they can afford. If school districts only hold in-person classes two or three days per week, working parents will also need help arranging and paying for child care that will cover out-of-school time for their school-aged children.

We also know that research shows us that high-quality early learning programs are a solid investment in Maine's future workforce. These programs teach our youngest children the cognitive, social, and emotional skills they need to succeed when they start kindergarten, creating the foundation for continued success throughout school. Equally important, early education teachers make it possible for many parents to go to work and know that their children are safe and nurtured.

As you know, during the past four months, child care providers have suffered unprecedented financial losses. As they reopen, they have less income because of smaller group sizes to accommodate the needed social distancing - most are operating at just 65 percent of capacity. Yet, at the same time they are incurring higher costs to meet all the COVID-19 health and safety requirements.

Without additional state and federal financial support, many providers will be unable to sustain their compounding operating losses. Working parents, and our economy, cannot afford to lose more providers. We need to support them now so they will still be here when the COVID-19 crisis ends.

We hope that you adopt the recent recommendations from our Economic Recovery Committee and **provide $20 million to support child care providers for our youngest children and $25 million to**

support child care for school-age children so that they can safely return to school, and their parents can return to work.

We also hope this current crisis will lead to the creation of more partnerships between public schools and child care providers, and that your Administration will encourage and incentivize such partnerships.

Thank you for your service to our great state.

Sincerely,



Newell A. Augur
Government Affairs Counsel
Pierce Atwood
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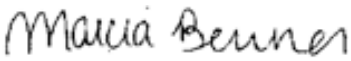
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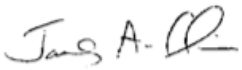
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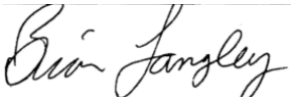
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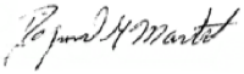
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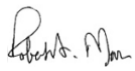
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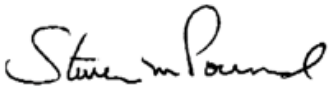
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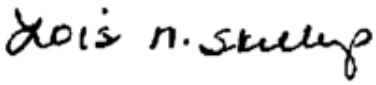
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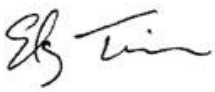
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