

We're the Ones You Pay Later

Maine sheriffs, chiefs and prosecutors urge policymakers to cut crime by investing in high-quality early education and care

Acknowledgements

Council for a Strong America is a national, bipartisan nonprofit that unites five organizations comprised of law enforcement leaders, retired admirals and generals, business executives, pastors, and prominent coaches and athletes who promote solutions that ensure our next generation of Americans will be citizen-ready.

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids

Thousands of police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors and violence survivors protecting public safety by promoting solutions that steer kids away from crime

Supported by tax-deductible contributions from foundations, individuals, and corporations.

Major funders:

Afterschool Alliance, Alliance for Early Success, Betterment Fund, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Bingham Program, Boone Family Foundation, California Education Policy Fund, California Endowment, Children Now, CME Group Foundation, Colorado Health Foundation, David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Dr. Scholl Foundation, First Five Years Fund, George Gund Foundation, Heising-Simons Foundation, Irene and George A. Davis Foundation, Irving Harris Foundation, John T. Gorman Foundation, Kresge Foundation, McCormick Foundation, Meadows Foundation, Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas, New Mexico Early Childhood Funders Group, Open Society Foundations, Potts Family Foundation, Raikes Foundation, Robert H. Dugger, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Sam L. Cohen Foundation, Sierra Health Foundation, Thrive by Five Washington, United Way of Greater Cincinnati, W. Clement and Jessie V. Stone Foundation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce Foundation, Zellerbach Family Foundation

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November 2016

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Chief Jim Toman helps out during recess at the Gardiner Early Learning Center.

Maine sheriffs have a direct message for everyone who cares about the impact and cost of crime:

Maine's jails are full of people serving time for serious and costly crimes. But it doesn't have to be that way. Providing at-risk kids with high-quality early learning opportunities through pre-kindergarten, Head Start, home visiting, and child care programs can reduce the human and fiscal costs of crime in the future.

Law enforcement leaders know that one of the best ways to keep young people from dropping out of school and becoming criminals is to make sure they have a foundation for success in their earliest years. By standing up in support of high-quality early education for kids today, we will see less crime and incarceration in years to come.

“ The path to crime frequently starts with dropping out of high school. For many children, those academic and behavior problems show up before they even enter kindergarten.”



Michael J. Sauschuck
Chief of Police, Portland



Maine spends \$188 million on corrections each year

We already know where our current path is leading us:



Although crime rates have fallen over the past 20 years, including in Maine, there are still 1.2 million violent crimes and eight million property crimes committed against people in our communities across America every year.¹ Maine has one of the lowest crime rates in the country. However, there are still **1,600 violent crimes and 33,500 property crimes** committed in our state every year, and arrests for drug abuse are on the rise.²

Maine has about 2,100 adults incarcerated in state prisons;³



Nationally, we spend nearly \$75 billion a year to incarcerate adults in federal and state prisons or local jails.⁴ **Maine spends close to \$188 million a year;**⁵

41 percent of state prisoners in Maine do not have a high school diploma or GED, compared to eight percent of all Mainers, and finding stable employment once they leave prison is very challenging.⁶



Law enforcement leaders base their views on both personal experiences and research. A study that followed children who participated in high-quality early education and parent coaching through Chicago's Child-Parent Centers found that children not served were 70 percent more likely to be arrested for a violent crime by age 18 than those who participated.

How can early learning reduce crime? Better educational outcomes such as high school graduation correspond with less crime. High-quality pre-K programs have been shown to impact both short-term and long-term academic achievement. For example, an evaluation found that children who participated in Maine's Public Preschool Program (PPP) had higher test scores in elementary school.

Reducing crime is one of the key reasons why Governors and state legislators across the political spectrum have made bold commitments to high-quality early education and care. **And now we are at a key fork in the road: Policymakers in our state have an opportunity to invest in early learning opportunities for at-risk children.**

We currently spend \$75 billion every year on corrections nationwide to incarcerate more than two million criminals. **Maine spends nearly \$188 million a year.**

A sophisticated analysis of nearly 20 pre-kindergarten programs for disadvantaged children demonstrated that quality pre-K returned an average "profit" (economic benefits minus costs) to society of nearly \$30,000 for every child served by cutting crime and the cost of incarceration and reducing other costs such as special education and grade retention.

The choice for Maine is simple: Pay for high-quality early education programs now, or pay far more later for the costs of crime in Maine.

The Cost of Crime in Maine

As law enforcement leaders, our number one priority is protecting the safety of our communities in Maine. We do this by arresting, prosecuting and, when necessary, incarcerating people who commit crimes. But ultimately our best opportunity to improve public safety is to keep people from becoming involved in crime in the first place. To do so, we urge our elected leaders to invest in strategies and practices that have proven, positive and long-term impacts on crime reduction.

Too Many Children Are Falling Behind Before They Start School

Fortunately, we can steer thousands of children across Maine toward more successful lives through high-quality early education, which has proven it can lead to **less child abuse and neglect, better performance in school, fewer high school drop-outs and, ultimately, fewer crimes committed and a reduction in the number of prisoners.**

The research behind these outcomes shows that the early childhood period (birth to age 5) is a time of rapid brain development, and that hundreds of new brain connections form every second.⁷ Early experiences play a large role in determining how brain connections are formed and in the “wiring” that becomes the foundation on which all later learning is built.

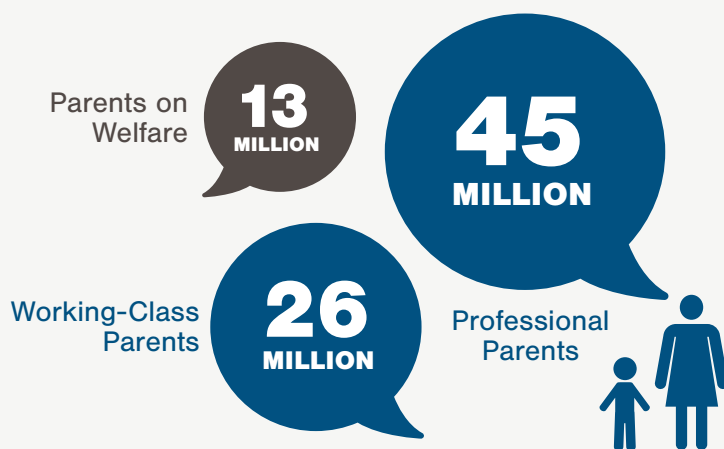
For example, by age six months, babies start to understand the link between words



and their meanings. This sets the stage for language development and later reading, which are key to later school success. Yet children from different backgrounds have very different early experiences.

Researchers observed children in their own homes monthly for more than two years, until the age of three, and recorded how many words their parents spoke to them.

Words Spoken by Parents to their Young Children



Source: Hart & Risley, 2004

A Fork in the Road





The Path to Crime

The risk factors for crime can show up very early in life. Many parents and child care providers don't know the value of talking and reading to young children, and fostering creative play to develop cognitive, physical and behavioral skills. Too many young parents don't have good parenting mentors; some become overwhelmed and neglect or lash out at their children.

The Path to Success

When children attend high-quality pre-K, they reap the benefits of a good teacher and interactions with peers, which can lead to better academic and social outcomes when they enter kindergarten. Voluntary home visiting programs start even earlier, working with at-risk parents during pregnancy and infancy to foster their child's development and prevent child abuse and neglect.







-  More Dropouts
-  Worse school outcomes
-  More behavior problems
-  More abuse and neglect



**More Crime =
More Prisoners**



-  Fewer Dropouts
-  Better school outcomes
-  Fewer behavior problems
-  Less abuse and neglect



**More Graduates =
More Productive Adults**

There were large differences in the average number of words spoken to the children by professional parents, working class parents, and parents receiving welfare:

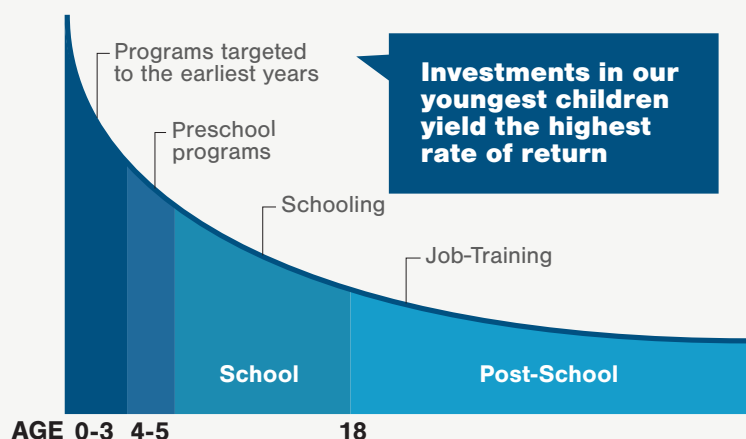
- **professional parents:** 45 million words
- **working-class parents:** 26 million
- **parents receiving welfare:** 13 million.⁸

These differences affected the children's vocabulary development: by age three, children with professional parents had average vocabularies of 1,116 words, compared with 749 words for working-class and 525 for children of parents receiving welfare. By the time children reach kindergarten, too many are not only far behind in vocabulary development, but on pre-literacy and pre-math skills (such as knowing the alphabet or being able to count to 10), as well.

Many also face challenges in learning to control impulses and behavior so they can get along with other students and teachers. High-quality early education and care can help these children get on track, both academically and behaviorally, so they will be ready for kindergarten, despite these early deficits. High-quality early childhood programs also work with parents, to support them in their role as their children's first teachers.

James Heckman, the Nobel Prize-winning economist from the University of Chicago, has conducted groundbreaking work with economists, statisticians and neuroscientists and has proven that the quality of early childhood development strongly influences health, social and economic outcomes. He argues that we should invest sufficiently in younger children and in providing "coaching" for their parents because those early investments will pay off.⁹

Rate of Return to Human Capital Investment at Different Ages



Source: Nobel Laureate Dr. James Heckman, 2013

High-Quality Early Care and Education: A Path to Less Crime

The path we set children upon, in their earliest years, can make a huge difference as they proceed through school and beyond. Research has shown that high-quality early education and care from birth through pre-kindergarten will result in more successful outcomes:

Less child abuse and neglect

The Chicago Child-Parent Center (CPC) is an early learning program that has served over 100,000 children and followed them up to age 28. This program also coaches parents to help them understand their children's health needs, create safer home environments and develop parenting skills. CPC cut child abuse and neglect in half for the children served, compared with similar children from families not being helped.¹⁰

Fewer behavior problems

Pennsylvania's public pre-K program cut the proportion of children at risk for problematic



Chief Michael Gahagan talks with a Caribou Head Start student about their favorite dinosaurs.

social and self-control behavior from 22 percent to four percent.¹¹

Better school outcomes

Increases in reading and math scores that persist:

At-risk four-year olds who attended Maine's Public Preschool Program (PPP) scored four to seven percentage points higher on reading and math assessments in the third and fourth grades when compared to their like peers who didn't attend pre-K.¹²

Similarly, North Carolina's Smart Start and More at Four initiatives to improve early education found that the children in counties that spent more per student were five months ahead in reading at third grade and three to five months ahead in math by third grade when compared with children in counties that spent less per student.¹³

Meanwhile, New Jersey's pre-K program, which serves disadvantaged school districts statewide, reported that participating children were three-fourths of a year ahead in math and two-thirds of a year ahead in literacy in fourth and fifth grades.¹⁴

These findings show that academic benefits from high-quality pre-kindergarten need not "fade out" as children age. The New Jersey researchers report that their findings are on par with the earlier results achieved by Chicago's CPC program, which later went on to achieve very strong graduation and crime reduction outcomes.

Less special education: Pennsylvania's pre-K program's success in helping children learn self-control indicates fewer of those children will need special education. New Jersey, which has followed its children through the fourth and fifth grades, found that the children served were 31 percent less likely to be placed in special education than a control group.¹⁵

Not held back in school: Participants in Michigan's state pre-K were held back in school 51 percent less often than non-participants.¹⁶ New Jersey's pre-K program found its children were held back 40 percent less often.¹⁷

Increasing graduation rates decreases serious crime

Economists Enrico Moretti and Lance Lochner studied the relationship over time between changes in graduation rates and crime. They concluded that a 10 percentage-point increase in graduation rates—going from 50 percent to 60 percent, for example—reduces murder and assault rates by about 20 percent.

Source: Lochner & Moretti 2004

Fewer dropouts

- The Chicago CPC program reported a **29 percent increase in high school graduation rates** by age 20 among its participants.¹⁸
- Michigan's pre-K program reported a **35 percent increase in graduates**.¹⁹
- The Perry Preschool Program saw a **44 percent increase in graduation rates** by age 40.²⁰

*It's significant to note that in Maine, 13 percent of high school students fail to graduate on time.*²¹

Less crime

- By age 18, children not served by the Chicago CPC program were **70 percent more likely to be arrested** for a violent crime.²²
- By age 27, children not served by the Perry Preschool Program were **five times more likely to be chronic offenders**, with five or more arrests.²³

Fewer prisoners

- By age 24, the people served by the Chicago CPC were **20 percent less likely to have served time in a jail or prison**.²⁴
- By age 40, the children served by the Perry Preschool program were **46 percent less likely to have been sentenced to prison or jail**.²⁵

It All Adds Up

No baby is destined, at birth, to become a criminal. The road to criminal behavior is paved with such challenges as childhood abuse and neglect, inadequate preparation for school, unaddressed behavior problems, poor academic performance and dropping out of high school. The path to success in life is driven by school readiness, the ability to get

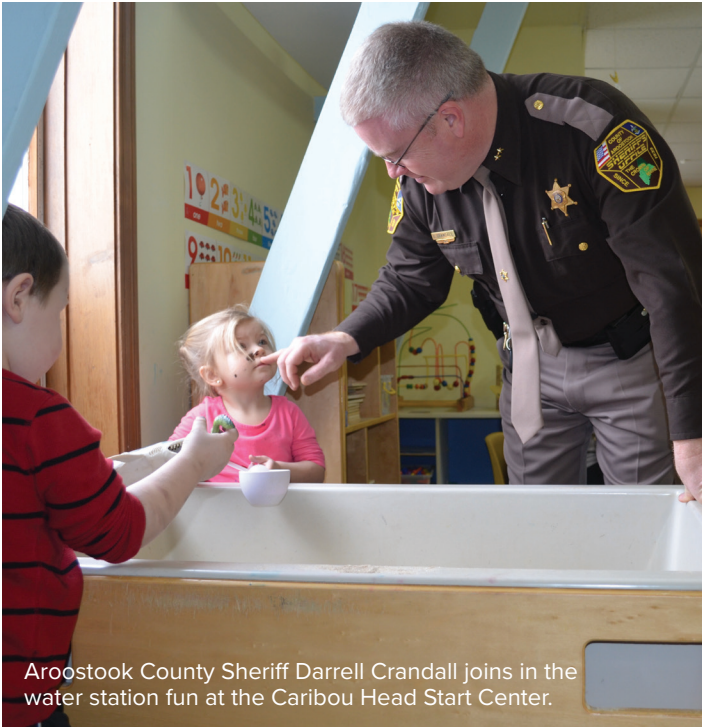


Chief Phil Crowell strategizes with student to solve puzzles at the Webster Head Start, Childcare and PreK Center in Auburn.

Stronger Parents

The most successful early childhood programs with long-term results—such as the Perry Preschool, CPC and New Jersey's state pre-K program—work with parents to teach them how to reinforce positive behaviors and encourage them to routinely read and speak to their children, so they are better prepared for success in the years to come.

Parents are their children's first and most important teachers. However, some parents do not have the knowledge or experience necessary to fully support their children's development. High-quality early childhood programs partner with parents to help them improve their children's academic and behavioral outcomes. In Maine, home-visiting programs such as Maine Families and Early Head Start target assistance to new parents in at-risk households on a voluntary basis.



Aroostook County Sheriff Darrell Crandall joins in the water station fun at the Caribou Head Start Center.

Maine must expand access to high-quality pre-K programs

As of spring 2015, **42 percent of four-year-olds in Maine were enrolled in the state's Public Preschool Program (PPP) or Head Start.**³² As Maine looks to increase access, it also needs to be sure to continue to follow the successful approaches that will help ensure high quality. Maine must rigorously measure results as well, so it can continually strive to attain even greater results going forward.³³ That is how our state will reap the full rewards possible from effective pre-K programs.

along with others, academic achievement and high school graduation. We need to take action, right now, to ensure children have the opportunity for quality early education and care so they can start on the right path for life.

Quality and Accountability Are Key

To achieve lasting results, programs must be high quality. The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) lists 10 measures of program quality that include learning standards, teacher credentials and training, class size, teacher-child ratios, screening and other services, and program oversight.²⁶ In 2015, Maine met five out of 10 of the quality benchmarks. By the 2017-18 school year, programs must meet all 10 benchmarks, as required by Maine's Department of Education.²⁷ Maine would be the eighth state in the country to achieve this goal.²⁸

There are other factors that contribute to quality. For example, recent studies focus on what actually happens in the classroom, particularly the quality of teacher-child interactions and teacher instruction.²⁹ Maine is moving in this direction, conducting a pilot study using an evidence-based classroom observation instrument to measure classroom quality.³⁰

Data and accountability is also important. High-quality early learning programs collect data to see how they are performing, at every level—district, program, teacher and student. These data are then used to improve program performance, to ensure that children are well-prepared for school.

NIEER Director Steve Barnett argues that “an accountability and continuous improvement system is a prerequisite for quality, as is adequate funding for those

being held accountable.”³¹ Administrators of our most successful state pre-k programs take nothing for granted and are constantly working to learn from each other and make improvements.

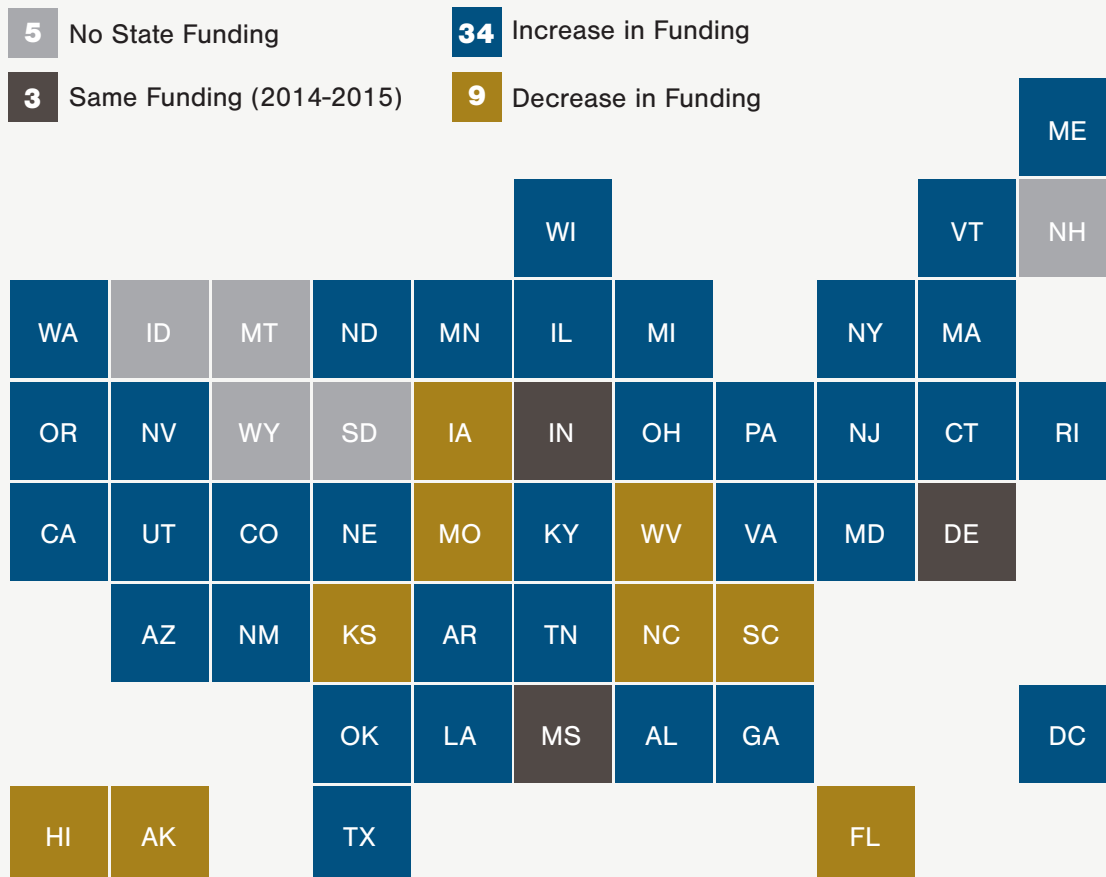
States Know Early Learning Works

Across the nation, pre-k has received support from both sides of the political aisle. In the 2015-2016 budget year, 32 states—22 with Republican leadership and 10 with Democratic leadership—increased funding for pre-K.³⁴

Demonstrated Economic Benefits

A well-respected, independent cost-benefit analysis of nearly 20 different studies of showed that pre-K can return, on average, a “profit” (economic benefits minus costs) to society of nearly \$30,000 for every child served.³⁵ Applying these benefits to the approximately 5,400 children currently served in public pre-K and Head Start in Maine, **our state will likely reap a return of more than \$162 million over the lifetime of these children.**³⁶ These economic benefits

State Preschool Funding (2015-2016)



Source: Education Commission of the States

accrue due largely to reductions in the cost of future crime and increases in participants' future wages, as well as decreases in other costs to society, such as children being held back in school or receiving special education. Other estimates of benefits are much higher. Clearly, pre-K more than pays for itself.

Expanding Pre-K Would Save Maine More than \$69 Million

In 2014, Maine received a federal grant to expand pre-K access to 500 children in 33 new pre-K classrooms, and enhance program quality in 23 existing classrooms.³⁷ That expansion allowed Maine to serve 42 percent of its four-year-old population. Since then, another 13 school districts have added pre-K classrooms; however, it is not clear how many children those additional classrooms are currently serving.³⁸

Applying the above cost-benefit analysis, if Maine were to increase the percentage of four-year-olds enrolled in pre-K and Head Start to 60 percent—an addition of roughly 2,300 children—**that would save our state approximately \$69 million** for each graduating class of preschoolers.³⁹

“Many kids are starting school too far behind and never catching up. If we want less crime in our state, we should invest upfront in early learning opportunities, rather than paying the high cost of school failure.”



Troy Morton
Sheriff, Penobscot County

Conclusion

Maine law enforcement officers urge policymakers to invest further in early learning opportunities for at-risk children, including pre-K, Head Start, child care, and home visiting programs.

As law enforcement leaders, our job is to put those who commit serious crimes behind bars in Maine. But we all agree that a better and less expensive way to stop crime going forward is to prevent as many young children as possible from growing up to become involved in crime in the first place.

If Maine continues to invest wisely in early learning opportunities for its disadvantaged children, thousands of children can become successful, productive adults, instead of individuals of wasted potential who too often cost taxpayers dearly. When we support what works for our disadvantaged children, we put them and our state on a different, safer path.

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Fight Crime: Invest in Kids

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