



**MISSION:  
READINESS**  
COUNCIL FOR A STRONG AMERICA

MAINE

February 13, 2023

Re: LD 258 "An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2023, June 30, 2024 and June 30, 2025"

Dear Chairs Rotundo, Rafferty, Sachs and Brennan, and Members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee and the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

We are writing in support of additional funding to continue to expand voluntary public PreK across Maine.

Some of you on these Committees will be familiar with our reasons, which we have expressed at previous public hearings on the various biennial and supplemental state budgets.

We make our comments as a private citizens, fathers, grandfathers, former teachers, former Adjutant Generals and as members of Mission: Readiness. Mission: Readiness is a national bi-partisan organization of more than 750 retired admirals and generals, 27 of whom are here in Maine, working to ensure that today's young people are prepared for successful lives with many career options, including serving our nation in or out of uniform.

As public policy makers we would like you to see a connection that may not be readily apparent: why early education is so important not only for the young children who attend, but also for the future of our country.

During the summer of 2022, the U.S. Department of Defense shared preliminary details from its Qualified Military Available (QMA) study showing the ineligibility rate for 17- to 24-year-olds in our nation has climbed from the previously reported 71% to 77% nationwide. While we are awaiting the release of the full QMA study that will provide additional details and state-level data, the initial results indicated that several factors contributing to the root causes of ineligibility have grown worse. The factors include lack of physical fitness, lack of educational attainment, and involvement in crime or substance abuse. It's also important to note that the study was completed in 2020, and therefore, does not capture the full impacts of the pandemic.

Our Armed Forces' most important element is its people. We are concerned about our nation having the number of people and the quality of minds that we will need for the future.

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What does education, especially early childhood education, have to do with our national security? Let us explain the connection.

The first five years of a person's life are fundamental to all of the success or failure that comes afterwards. This is the time period when young children develop core pre-literacy and pre-math skills, and build the foundations for all later learning.

High-quality pre-K is a long-term strategy that will help young people in Maine succeed in school, so they can graduate and move forward to a productive career.

Research in multiple states shows the direct link between the quality of early education and later academic performances. Children who attend high-quality preschool are more likely to arrive at kindergarten ready to learn, with enhanced early math, language, and literacy skills. They are also less likely to be held back in school or to need special education, and more likely to be proficient in reading and math. Preschool participants also have an increased probability of graduating from high school.

Investments in early education will increase the number of young people who will be qualified candidates for service if they choose to enlist. By providing young children with pre-K opportunities for early learning, we can help them become successful students who are more likely to finish school and pursue the career path of their choice.

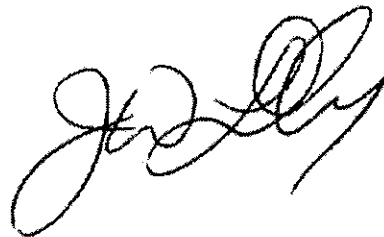
For those of us who have made a career in the military, it has been an outstanding experience that afforded us opportunities for learning self-discipline, building professional skills, and serving our country and communities. It would be a shame for the next generation not to have the same opportunities.

We urge both Committees to support the budget proposal to increase funding to expand high-quality Pre-K throughout Maine.

Sincerely,



Earl L. Adams  
Major General, U.S. Army (Retired)  
*Pittston*



John W. "Bill" Libby  
Major General, U.S. Army (Retired)  
*Old Orchard Beach*