PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Second community forum aims to continue “Invest in Tomorrow” conversation for Aroostook County

AROOSTOOK COUNTY – On Monday, November 27, at the University of Maine at Presque Isle’s Campus Center, community-minded organizations and members of the public are invited to come together to host a follow-up conversation that began in March focusing on the future of Aroostook County and ideas centered around solving childhood poverty in the region. The public is encouraged to join in the forum, "Continuing the Conversation - Invest in Tomorrow: Solving Child Poverty is Everyone’s Business," which begins at 2:30 p.m. that day.

This is the second such forum hosted in Aroostook County on the topic of what can be done to improve the future of Maine kids, our community and our state. Organizers held the first discussion in March, which featured the release of Aroostook County Action Program’s Community Assessment. ACAP has since developed its 2018-2021 Strategic Plan, based in large part on results of the Community Assessment. Copies of the newly adopted Strategic Plan will be available at the forum.

"We learned a lot at the community forums last spring and we want to continue to engage these communities in this work. We are inviting people to come back together and keep working with us to create more opportunity for kids and families," said Robyn Merrill, executive director of Maine Equal Justice Partners. "Based on lessons learned at the forums, additional input from stakeholders, and data, a working group will develop a set of recommendations to address the primary factors that contribute to child poverty and present these recommendations to a broader stakeholder group for their consideration."

Ten state and local community organizations have come together to host both the spring and fall regional forums in Aroostook County. They include: Maine State Chamber of Commerce; John T. Gorman Foundation; Maine Children’s Alliance; Maine Community Action Association; Maine Community Foundation; Maine Equal Justice Partners; Aroostook County Action Program; Central Aroostook Chamber of Commerce; Northeastern Workforce Development Board; and United Way of Aroostook.

Similar forums were held in three other regions of the state last spring. Follow-up forums are also being planned in those three communities over the next several weeks.

"One of the key areas identified in our new Strategic Plan is to engage the community in a more comprehensive conversation around the causes and conditions of poverty. It was clear from the focus groups we brought together a year ago to provide input in our Community Assessment, that there are many misperceptions," said Jason Parent, executive director/CEO of ACAP. "This second forum will
further our conversation and begin to address what we can do collectively to positively impact the lives of our most vulnerable citizens, especially children."

County residents are encouraged to participate in the forum. Refreshments will be served. Financial assistance for child care and transportation, for those who it would otherwise be a barrier, is available. For more information on the forum, or to request assistance, contact Gloria Duncan at ACAP at (207) 764-3721 or gduncan@acap-me.org.

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