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Harold Alfond Foundation and Alfond Scholarship Foundation Announce Major Milestone for My Alfond Grant Program

Governor Janet T. Mills Invites Preschool Children from Educare Central Maine and Southern Kennebec Child Development Corporation to Help Celebrate Positive Impact of Pioneering Grant Program

Portland, Maine – August 27, 2019 – The Harold Alfond Foundation (HAF) and Alfond Scholarship Foundation (ASF) announced today that the My Alfond Grant program, which invests \$500 at birth for Maine resident babies for their future education, has reached a major milestone.

As of August 27, 2019 \$50 million in Alfond Grants has now been invested for 100,000 Maine children. When family savings in NextGen 529™ accounts as well as NextGen 529 matching grants received through the Finance Authority of Maine (FAME) are included, total savings for the future education of these children tops \$138 million. The My Alfond Grant program is the first in the nation to invest statewide, universally and at birth and is a model for programs in cities, counties and states across the United States. It is the only program in the country to invest \$500 for each eligible child.

To celebrate the milestone, Governor Janet Mills invited Harold Alfond Foundation Chairman Greg Powell, ASF President & CEO Colleen Quint, the Finance Authority of Maine (FAME), which helps to administer the Alfond Grant, along with representatives of the Department of Education, Department of Economic and Community Development, Department of Health and Human Services, the Office of Policy Innovation and the Future, as well as preschool-aged children and their families from Educare Central Maine and Southern Kennebec Child Development Corporation, to the Blaine House for juice and snacks, storytelling and a look back at the Alfond Grant's history and its ongoing impact on Maine.

"I am honored to welcome the Harold Alfond Foundation to the Blaine House in recognition of this important milestone for Maine children," said Governor Janet Mills. "Harold Alfond's commitment to expanding access to quality education and to creating opportunity for all Maine children to realize their full potential is one we should all share."

According to MaineSpark, a statewide coalition of business and education leaders working to boost Maine's educational outcomes to realize 60% of Maine workers with a credential of value by 2025, Maine needs 158,000 more workers credentialed and educated by 2025 to seize the excellent job opportunities available in the coming years.

“The strength of Maine’s economy depends on a skilled workforce ready to power thriving businesses, launch innovative industries, and create the technology and tools of tomorrow. Ensuring Maine people have the education and skills training they need to succeed is at the foundation of our economic growth,” continued Governor Mills. “As Maine continues to confront an aging population and workforce shortage, the My Alford Grant program’s work to give Maine children a head start on their future is essential to our state’s success.”

Funding for the My Alford Grant Program is provided by the Harold Alford Foundation, a private family foundation. The program is managed by the Alford Scholarship Foundation, a Maine non-profit and FAME, a quasi-independent government agency, helps administer the program.

“As Governor, it is my goal to support public and private partnerships like the My Alford Grant Program which bring philanthropy, non-profits, government agencies and Maine people together to create a bright future for our state,” said Governor Mills. “It is because of your efforts 100,000 Maine children have the tools for success and I thank you for all of your hard work on behalf of our state.”

A Legacy Gift Leads to First in Nation Grant Program

Harold Alford, one of Maine’s most prominent businessmen and philanthropists, made a legacy gift to Maine’s future shortly before his passing in 2007. His vision was to provide every Maine baby a \$500 grant in order to improve access to higher education and to inspire families to invest in their children. With this gift the first-in-the-nation statewide grant program to help children save for higher education costs starting at birth was born and the Alford Scholarship Foundation (ASF), a non-profit organization, was formed to oversee the investment of the \$500 Alford Grant for every Maine resident baby.

The My Alford Grant program is nationally recognized as an innovative model for other states to follow. Piloted in 2008 in collaboration with MaineGeneral Health system, eligible Maine resident babies were initially required to open a NextGen 529 account prior to the child’s first birthday in order to be awarded the \$500 Alford Grant. NextGen 529 is the state’s 529 education savings plan administered by FAME. A total of 329 Alford Grants were awarded that first year for children born at MaineGeneral Hospital. In 2009, the program expanded statewide and by the end of 2012, nearly 25,000 Maine children had been awarded Alford Grants. This represents approximately 40% of all eligible children born during that time period.

Today, the \$500 Alford Grant is universal – meaning that all babies born Maine residents on or after January 1, 2013 have been automatically awarded the grant¹. The grant is invested by the Alford Scholarship Foundation until the child decides to use it to help pay for eligible higher education expenses at eligible higher education institutions, which may include vocational programs as well as those offering associate’s and bachelor’s degrees or graduate school. Recipients have until age 28 to use the grant; any grants not utilized by that age automatically revert back to ASF to use for grants to future Maine children. If families want to be more proactive in saving for higher education costs themselves, they can open a college savings account in order to make their own contributions. The Alford Grant is a grant and not a college savings account. NextGen 529, which is administered by FAME,

¹ The Alford Grant is not automatic in all circumstances and is also available in limited other circumstances. The use of the Alford Grant is also subject to certain restrictions – see Alford Grant Guidelines at NextGenforME.com/AlfordGuidelines

offers eligible Maine residents a variety of matching grants² once an account is opened. FAME also helps to administer the My Alford Grant program.

“We are deeply honored to work so closely with the Harold Alford Foundation and Alford Scholarship Foundation in the administration of the My Alford Grant program,” said Bruce Wagner, CEO of FAME. “Our goals and the program goals are aligned: to support Maine families in saving for their future education, and to build a more robust future for Maine through a more educated workforce. This is pioneering work, and we are proud to be part of it. Now we invite Maine families as well as business and community leaders to join us by investing in the future of Maine’s children and, by extension, the future prosperity of the state.”

Milestone Celebration Event

The announcement of the \$50 million invested for 100,000 Maine children was made by Harold Alford Foundation Chairman Greg Powell. During the celebratory event, Governor Mills, a grandmother of several recent high school and college graduates, talked about the importance of families playing an active role in helping their children and grandchildren have high aspirations, set goals and work hard to achieve them. She encouraged all Maine families to start planning and preparing for their children to pursue higher education when they are young because “that’s how we help them realize their dreams...and their potential.” After speaking with families, she engaged with the children by reading Blueberries for Sal by Robert McCloskey.

“I am honored to be here with so many distinguished guests and to see so many bright smiling faces here today – these children truly are the future of Maine,” said Greg Powell, chairman of the Harold Alford Foundation.

“We know the best way to attain an educated workforce to meet changing labor and economic needs in our state is to invest in education beyond high school and make it accessible and affordable for more of our youth,” he continued. “We’ve learned that children with college savings are three times more likely to go to college and four times more likely to graduate, even when they only have a few hundred dollars saved in the account. This is a program that has both practical and aspirational benefits. It makes a difference for these Maine children, and it makes a difference for the state as a whole.”

Echoing the Governor’s sentiments, Powell noted the importance of families doing all they can from their children’s earliest days to support their future. “Big lessons come in little packages, and saving even a little bit can make a big difference,” said Powell, who pointed to Just Saving My Money, by Mercer Mayer and helped the children see the connection between saving now for something they might want later – like continuing their education after high school. At the conclusion of the celebration, the Alford Scholarship Foundation gave each child a copy of the book in honor of the milestone.

He concluded: “Building college aspirations, increasing completion of postsecondary education, and making it possible for more children to go to college or trade school by increasing college savings and alleviating student debt can play a significant role in boosting Maine’s overall economy. We have made

² Maine grants are linked to eligible Maine accounts. Upon withdrawal, grants are paid only to institutions of higher education. See Terms and Conditions of Maine Grant Programs for other conditions and restrictions that apply at NextGenforME.com.

this \$50 million investment in the 100,000 Maine children who have been awarded the grant so far. Now we hope to see families and partners across the state also step up to invest in and support the future education of these wonderful children...and of the Alfond Grantees who will follow them.”

To learn more about the program, please visit: www.myalfondgrant.org

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About the Alfond Scholarship Foundation & the Alfond Grant

Harold Alfond was a Maine businessman and philanthropist who wanted every Maine baby to have the opportunity that higher education brings. The Alfond Scholarship Foundation (ASF) is a non-profit organization he created to invest the \$500 Alfond Grant at birth for every Maine resident baby for their future education. The Alfond Grant is the grant awarded to all babies born Maine residents on or after January 1, 2013. For Maine children born 2008-2012, the grant was available on a more limited basis. To learn more about the grant, see www.MyAlfondGrant.org.

About the Harold Alfond Foundation

The Harold Alfond Foundation furthers the legacy of Harold Alfond by investing in education, healthcare, youth development and other philanthropic charitable causes that hold the promise of making enduring transformative contributions to the community and the state of Maine. To learn more about the Harold Alfond Foundation, please visit www.haroldalfondfoundation.org.

About FAME and NextGen 529

***The Finance Authority of Maine (FAME)** is a quasi-independent state agency that provides innovative financial solutions to help Maine citizens pursue business and educational opportunities. FAME helps to lead the creation of good paying jobs for Maine citizens by working at the nexus between economic and workforce development. To learn more about FAME, please visit www.famemaine.com.*

NextGen 529 is a Section 529 plan administered by the Finance Authority of Maine (FAME). Before you invest in NextGen 529, request a NextGen 529 Program Description from your Merrill Financial Advisor or Maine Distribution Agent or call Merrill Edge at 1-877-463-9843 and read it carefully. The Program Description contains more complete information, including investment objectives, charges, expenses and risks of investing in NextGen 529, which you should carefully consider before investing. You also should consider whether you or your designated beneficiary's home state offers any state tax or other state benefits such as financial aid, scholarship funds, and protection from creditors that are only available for investments in such state's 529 plan. Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Smith Incorporated, a registered broker-dealer, member SIPC, is the program manager and underwriter.