

MAINE PUBLIC
HEALTH
ASSOCIATION

20
23

INTERIM POLICY REPORT



Introduction

We are committed to advancing evidence-based policies that protect and promote public health for all people in Maine.

During the first session of the 131st Legislature, MPHA influenced more than 40 pieces of legislation, across a wide range of public health issues. We had notable wins for Paid Family Leave and the creation of the Blue Ribbon Commission to Design a Plan for Sustained Investment in Preventing Disease and Improving the Health of Maine Communities.

I want to thank our members who reached out to their legislators; especially those that went above and beyond to help us move the needle on flavored tobacco restrictions, oversight on cannabis, and recognizing Wabanaki Sovereignty. You helped make good public health work happen and we are so grateful.

Overall, we are proud of our work, but know we can improve. If you would like to provide us with feedback or share other insights, we welcome hearing from you. Please do reach out.

Below, I have included our board-approved policy priorities, as well as the bills we engaged on this first session in 2023. Bills that passed are listed categorically; I have also included bills we played defense on (i.e., MPHA opposed the bills and they did not pass), as well as bills we supported that failed to pass.

Thank you for supporting our work.

In solidarity,
Becca Boulos, MPH, PhD
MPHA Executive Director

Policy Priorities

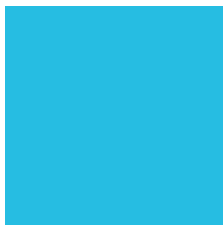
We have 5 policy priorities for the 131st legislature.

As a statewide public health organization, MPHA advocates for a wide-range of issues that impact people and places in Maine. Each session, we survey members, meet with partners, assess the current political and cultural environment, and then identify a list of policy priorities. While we will advance or defeat legislation in other areas, these are our 5 priorities for the 131st legislature.



PUBLIC HEALTH FUNDING

Ensure funds from the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement are used for tobacco prevention and control, and that public health programs and workforce are sustainably and consistently funded.



BOLSTER LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH EFFORTS

Support local boards of health and local health officer training, as well as staffing at local public health units and funding for public health districts.



WABANAKI SELF-DETERMINATION

Advance policies that will recognize and reinforce Wabanaki self-determination and tribes' inherent sovereignty.



ENDING THE SALE OF ALL FLAVORED TOBACCO PRODUCTS

End the sale and marketing of all flavored tobacco products in Maine to protect kids from a potentially life-long struggle with tobacco addiction.



REDUCE UNSAFE USE OF CANNABIS AND ALCOHOL

Increase state funding for cannabis and alcohol use prevention and education, and advance efforts to reduce youth access.

Measuring Progress

Progress made during the first session
of the 131st Legislature

Significant Wins

Paid Leave

Passed paid leave state policy, which covers up to 12 weeks of leave for all workers & job protection after 120 days of employment.

Public Health Funding

Established a Blue Ribbon Commission to identify strategies for improving sustainability and consistency in public health funding.

Notable Losses

Wabanaki Federal Benefits

Unable to override the Governor's veto of legislation that would have granted the tribes in Maine access to federal benefits.

Cannabis & Alcohol

Unable to add more protections and prevent expanded access to cannabis and alcohol.

Measuring Progress

Progress made during the first session of the 131st Legislature

Below, we share detailed results from priority bills during the first session of the 131st legislature. Below are priority issue bills we Supported (hyperlinked).

Policy Priority	Bills	Summary	Outcome
Public Health Funding	LD 1722	Public Health Funding Commission	Passed
Local Public Health	LD 510	Creates Associate Local Health Officers	Passed
Wabanaki Self-Determination	LD 2004	Federal Benefits Access	Defeated
	LD 1970	Indigenous Child Welfare Protections	Passed
	LD 78	Print Treaty Obligations	Passed
Flavored Tobacco	LD 1215	End Flavored Tobacco Sales & Marketing	<i>Carried Over to Second Session</i>
Cannabis & Alcohol	LD 88	Funding for Opt-In Municipalities	Defeated
	LD 94	Protections for Minors in Medical Cannabis	Defeated
	LD 202	Off-Premises Cannabis Sales Provisions	Passed
	LD 365	Improve Compliance with Cannabis Policies	Defeated

Measuring Progress

Other Public Health Legislation

Below, we share results from other public health bills that we supported (or defeated, as noted) during the first session of the 131st legislature.

Policy Issue	Bills		Outcome
Budget	LD 258		Passed
Environmental Health	LD 71	Petroleum Storage Tank Regulation	Passed
Healthcare	LD 351	OTC Birth Control	Passed
	LD 956	Healthcare Data	Passed
	LD 1040	MaineCare Coverage	Passed
	LD 199	MaineCare Expansion	Defeated
MPHA defeated bills that would have rolled back our strong:	Voter Accessibility Laws (LDs 34 & 237) Tobacco Control Laws (LDs 83 , 620 & 662) Cannabis Regulations (LDs 839) Environmental Laws (LDs 894)		

Next Steps

Where do we go from here?

In light of progress to date, we are maintaining these same 5 priority areas for the second session of the 131st Legislature. We are also adding Gun Safety to our priority list to prevent future gun violence. We will continue to advance the agenda of the Environmental Priorities Coalition, including on issues related to PFAS and climate change. To that end, we commit to:

01

Sustaining Coalition Participation

We will maintain our participation in the Wabanaki Alliance, Flavors Hook Kids, Environmental Priorities, and Maine Gun Safety Coalitions. We also commit to leading a new Cannabis Advocacy Coalition.

02

Holding State House Advocacy Days

We will be participating in State House Advocacy Days with our coalition partners, as well as hosting our own on Thursday, February 1st. Details forthcoming!

03

Engaging Members

We commit to increasing our member communications, education opportunities, and legislator outreach.

State & National Representation

MPHA Staff and Board serve in leadership positions on multiple boards, working groups, and coalitions, representing our members and the public health perspective in governmental, non-governmental, and multi-sector groups.

National

Sarah Rines, MPHA Board Member - Chair, American Public Health Association (APHA) Council of Affiliates & Ex-Officio Member, APHA Executive Board

Becca Boulos, MPHA Executive Director - Chair Designate, APHA Action Board

State

Matt Wellington, MPHA Associate Director - Member, Environmental Priorities Coalition Steering Committee

Becca Boulos - Co-Chair, Maine Climate Council's Community Resilience Working Group

Becca Boulos - Member, Maine Climate Council's Equity Subcommittee

Becca Boulos - Co-Chair, PFAS Fund Advisory Committee, Health Subcommittee

Becca Boulos - Member, PFAS Fund Advisory Committee

Becca Boulos - Member, Blue Ribbon Commission to Design a Plan for Sustained Investment in Preventing Disease and Improving the Health of Maine Communities

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the following foundations for supporting our advocacy and education efforts: Maine Health Access Foundation, The Bingham Program, Maine Cancer Foundation, Sewall Foundation, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, and the Betterment Fund.

We also would like to thank the 60+ partners that MPHA works with statewide on public health policies, including members of the Wabanaki Alliance, Flavors Hook Kids Coalition, Environmental Priorities Coalition, Maine Paid Leave Coalition, Maine Gun Safety Coalition, and many others.

**We thank you for your
continued support of
our efforts to protect
and promote public
health in Maine.**

Contact

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