



# MAINE PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

## ACTion Alert

February 22, 2013

### State Legislative Activity

The 126th Maine Legislature is now in full swing and so is the MPHA legislative team! We have already testified and actively advocated on five bills with three more on the agenda for the next two weeks. Below is a list of bills that MPHA has already taken an active position on, bills coming up and a list of our priority bills. If you would like to see a copy of testimony already submitted, please contact us. Please note that this list will grow significantly in the coming month as bills are printed and we explore the evidence behind each of those bills in relation to public health benefits and/or detriments.

#### Bills already testified on and MPHA position

- **LD 22:** An Act To Promote Equity in Business Opportunity for Tobacco Specialty Stores (**Oppose**)
- **LD 180:** An Act Concerning the Use of Tobacco Settlement Funds for Children's Health Care (**Support**)
- **LD 212:** An Act To Provide a Tax Exemption for Tobacco Sold to an Adult Member of a Federally Recognized Indian Tribe for Cultural, Spiritual or Ceremonial Purposes (**Neither for Nor Against**)
- **LD 230:** An Act To Establish the Commission on Health Care Cost and Quality (**Support**)
- **LD 68:** An Act to Prohibit the Use of Handheld Mobile Telephone while Operating a Motor Vehicle (**Support**)

#### Bills scheduled for public hearing within the next two weeks

- **LD 386:** An Act To Reduce Tobacco-related Illness and Lower Health Care Costs (**Support**)  
This bill requires the provision of tobacco cessation treatment for MaineCare members who are 18 years of age or older or are pregnant. It provides for comprehensive evidence-based coverage in accordance with the United States Preventive Services Task Force and the United States Public Health Service clinical practice guideline on treating tobacco use and dependence. The bill requires coverage without copayments or other cost sharing and directs the Department of Health and Human Services to pursue opportunities for federal reimbursement of the cost of coverage.  
[http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/display\\_ps.asp?LD=386&snum=126](http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/display_ps.asp?LD=386&snum=126)
- **LD 272:** An Act To Reduce Youth Cancer Risk (**Support**)  
This bill prohibits tanning facilities/operators from allowing individuals under 18 from tanning devices.  
[http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/display\\_ps.asp?LD=272&snum=126](http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/display_ps.asp?LD=272&snum=126)
- **LD 468:** An Act To Protect Public Health at Public Institutions of Higher Education (**Support**)  
This bill prohibits smoking on the grounds of any campus of the University of Maine System, the Maine Community College System or the Maine Maritime Academy.  
<http://www.mainelegislature.org/LawMakerWeb/summary.asp?ID=280046958>

#### Maine Public Health Association

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### **Priority Bills not yet scheduled for public hearing**

- Other Tobacco Products Equalization
- Cigarette Tax Increase
- School Age Anti-Obesity bill

Remember, one of your MPHA membership benefits is to bring legislation of interest to us for consideration/prioritization. Please contact us if you hear of a bill that you want to make sure is on our radar screen- with close to 2,000 bills this session, we are monitoring closely but can always use member help!

### **72% of Mainers Approve of a Higher Tobacco Tax**

New polling results released by the Maine People's Resource Center show that a vast majority of Mainers approve of raising the cigarette tax by \$1.50 per pack to solve the budget deficit. MPHA and our partners were not involved in the requesting or funding of this survey but are thrilled that the question was asked and at the results. As listed above in the legislative update, one of our priority bills this session is a \$1.50 per pack tobacco tax. Raising the tax on cigarettes will accomplish many things, a few of which are:

- Lower the smoking rate by 15.7%
- Keep 11,800 kids from becoming smokers
- Save Maine businesses \$16 million in lost productivity costs
- Save \$436.9 million dollars in long-term healthcare costs

In addition, a portion of the cigarette tax revenue within this bill is dedicated to restoring the cuts that have been made to the Fund for a Healthy Maine over the past two years, a win-win for our tobacco prevention and control programs in Maine.

To learn more about why increasing the tobacco tax is the right thing for Maine, email MPHA tobacco Policy Committee Chair Hilary Schneider (Hilary.Schneider@cancer.org) to get involved.

### **Important public health data now online**

Maine CDC is pleased to release the Maine Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) 2000-2010 Interactive web-query that should make BRFSS public health data easily available. BRFSS non-institutional adult data is available at the State, District, and County levels in a variety of public health categories including General Health, Chronic Disease, Risk Factors, Prevention Activities, and Environmental Health. Since 1987, Maine BRFSS data has been an important surveillance data source for Maine CDC programs, other DHHS programs, and public health entities. A new version with additional data and a new weighting methodology will be available soon. Subsequent yearly updates will be available.

The BRFSS web-query should be intuitive in its use. It has both basic and advanced query functions and there is a "Quick Guide" reference for more information. BRFSS data, and related BRFSS information is available at: <http://go.usa.gov/4yhm>

Any questions can be directed to Kip Neale, Maine BRFSS Coordinator  
Kip.Neale@Maine.gov or 287-1420.

