



# ANNUAL REPORT

# 2025



# Our Mission

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**Advance the health of all people and places in Maine.**

## **Who We Are**

The Maine Public Health Association represents nearly 950 individual and 80 organizational members across the state. We advance our mission through advocacy, education, partnerships, and support for the public health workforce.

## **Our guiding principles:**

- Serve as the leading voice for public health policy and advocacy in Maine.
- Convene broad-based stakeholders and promote evidence-based and data-driven policy.
- Promote healthy communities.
- Engage members in our work.

MPHA has longstanding partnerships with several public health organizations across the state and country, and is an affiliated association of the American Public Health Association (APHA).

We build strong partnerships across sectors to make Maine healthier and safer.

# A Message from MPHA's Executive Director & Board President

Dear MPHA Members, Supporters & Friends:

2025 was a challenging year. Divisiveness and misinformation threatened trust in our national health agencies and cost lives. Despite the unrelenting attacks on public health, we take heart knowing that MPHA is built for adversity.

- **We're non-partisan:** Public health is political, but it doesn't have to be partisan. We actively work to build bridges on issues that matter to us all, like keeping our kids safe, strengthening community connection, and ensuring economic opportunity.
- **We're scrappy:** With a small team, we think strategically about where and how we can make an impact, and then we step up and make it happen - whether that means passing policies in Augusta or defending critical public health funding in Washington D.C.
- **We're cross-sector minded:** MPHA's membership includes stakeholders from across public health sectors, including healthcare, banking, environmental health, business, food security, and many more. That diversity allows us to build resilient, non-traditional partnerships to further our shared mission.

Thanks to this approach, we made a significant impact this year, including:

- **Passing 4 out of our 6 state policy priorities**, including increasing Maine's tobacco tax for the first time in 20 years and helping to establish a housing fund for Mainers to shore up their homes in the face of a changing climate.
- **Launching the new Healthy States Collaborative**, a coalition of 30+ state public health associations working in tandem to protect federal public health funding and infrastructure that matter to our states and communities.
- **A record-breaking annual conference**, attracting 500 public health professionals and students from across Maine and New England.

Our work this past year would not have been possible without the support of our public health community, including our members, funders, donors, partners, and conference supporters. We're in this together. Thank you.

Rebecca Boulos, PhD, MPH  
Executive Director

Leo Waterston, MA  
Board President



# Advocating for Health

In 2025, we helped advance policies that will protect the health and well-being of all people in Maine. We won on 4 out of our 6 state policy priorities! Check out the highlights below and our interim [132nd Legislature Policy Report here](#).

## ***Reduced tobacco burden and harm***

Increased the tobacco tax by \$1.50 per pack of cigarettes, with a proportional increase to other tobacco products. This policy - the first tobacco tax increase in 20 years - will reduce youth tobacco use and encourage current smokers to quit.

## ***Protected public health funding***

Protected funding for public health programs included in the Fund for a Healthy Maine, and ensured full funding for the state's tobacco program.



*Above: Becca testifies in front of the Health and Human Services Committee*

## ***Promoted safer housing***

Supported LD 1 - bipartisan legislation that will help make Mainers' homes more resilient to extreme weather events.

## ***Supported local public health***

Updated the state's statute regulating local Boards of Health; they can now be more responsive to community needs.

## ***Led the Alliance for Responsible Cannabis in Maine***

Built and convened ARC-ME to push for responsible cannabis policy, including testing for medical cannabis.



*Left: MPHA members and partners educated legislators about cancer prevention and other health priorities at the MPHA Hall of Flags Day*

# Raising Visibility for Health



How Place Shapes Health: Dr. Rebecca Boulos on Optimism, Stress & the Power of Small Shifts

*MPHA's Executive Director, Becca Boulos, on Radio Maine*

We proactively built MPHA's media presence, commenting in dozens of stories about health issues that matter to Maine communities, and reaching tens of thousands of people with our messages.

## ***Maine applies for federal health funding to partially offset billions in Medicaid cuts-Portland Press Herald, Nov 2025***

"Rebecca Boulos, Executive Director of the Maine Public Health Association, called the application an important opportunity to improve health care access, quality and outcomes for people living in rural Maine."

## ***Mills' budget proposes increasing the cigarette tax for first time in 20 years-Maine Public, Jan 2025***

"It's absolutely crucial that there's corresponding tax increases for other tobacco products in addition to the cigarette tax, and that's because young people migrate to whatever's cheaper and more accessible on the market."

## ***CDC website changes regarding vaccines and autism raising concerns in Maine-News Center Maine, Nov 2025***

"This is counter to decades of scientific research. Not only are vaccines safe and effective—they save lives."

## ***Federal cuts to public health funds could have major impact in Maine-Spectrum News, March 2025***

"[Wellington] compared the funding, which was awarded to states to help fill major gaps in public health, to properly maintaining a house. 'Basically, if you have a house and there's a major storm and you realize 'oh gosh, we've got several leaks in our roof and a crack in our foundation' you're going to want to fix those leaks before the next big storm.'"



*Matt Wellington, MPHA Associate Director, speaking at a press event to launch MPHA's new cancer prevention policy toolkit.*



# Healthy States Collaborative

Public health threats - and opportunities - cross state lines. That's why Maine Public Health Association launched a new initiative in 2025, the Healthy States Collaborative, which convenes partner public health associations from 30+ states across every region of the country.

The Collaborative advocates for federal and state policies that safeguard health and strengthen opportunity. We emphasize that public health is not a partisan issue—it is a foundation for economic growth, national security, and the well-being of every community.

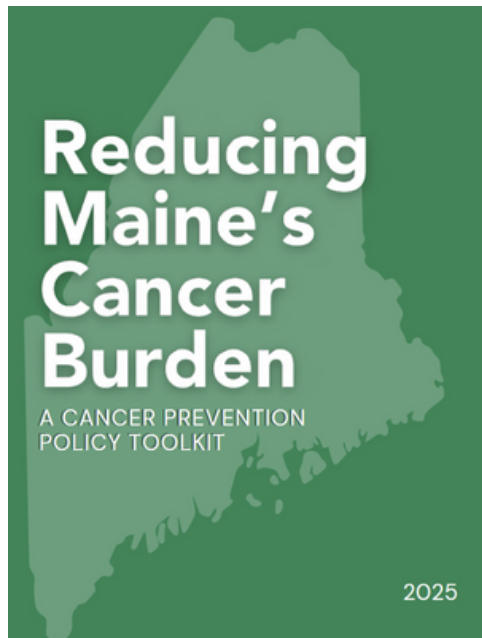
***Leading the Collaborative has launched MPHA into the national spotlight as a trusted partner working to protect federal public health funding and programs that matter to Maine and communities all over the country.***



*Left: Becca Boulos, Executive Director of MPHA, is awarded the Council of Affiliates Outstanding Service Award at the American Public Health Association annual conference in Washington D.C. for her role in launching the Healthy States Collaborative.*

*Below: Matt Wellington, MPHA Associate Director, presents on the Healthy States Collaborative at the APHA conference.*





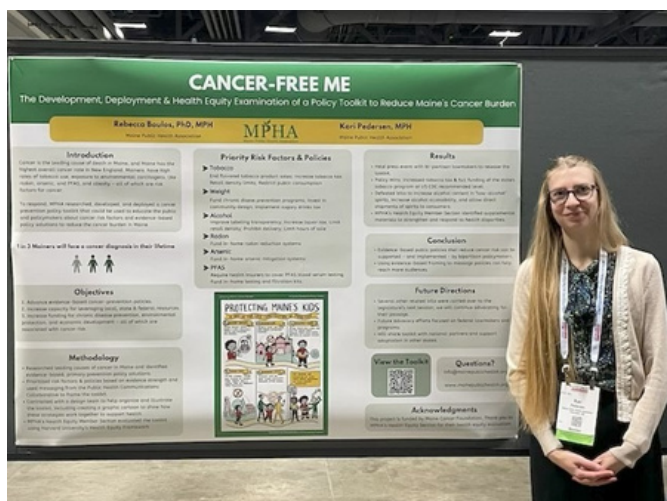
1 in 3 Mainers will face a cancer diagnosis in their lifetime. Cancer is the leading cause of death in Maine and our state has the highest overall cancer rate in New England.

That's why, thanks to the generous support of Maine Cancer Foundation, MPHA launched "Reducing Maine's Cancer Burden," a roadmap of evidence-based policies that Maine lawmakers can implement to reduce cancer risk in Maine.

The toolkit includes a breakdown of public health prevention principles, and policy recommendations to address six major risk factors for cancer: weight status, tobacco use, alcohol use, and environmental exposure to carcinogens like PFAS, radon, and arsenic.

***In 2025, MPHA used the new toolkit to educate lawmakers and successfully advocated for several evidence-based policies to reduce cancer risk, including:***

- Increasing Maine's tobacco tax, which will reduce youth tobacco use and encourage current smokers to quit.
- Reducing PFAS exposure and supporting the health of PFAS-exposed Mainers.
- Securing funding for cancer prevention-related programming.



*Above: The toolkit's comic strip illustrates how the policy recommendations protect Maine kids throughout their day. Left: Kari Pedersen, MPHA Operations Manager, presents the toolkit at the APHA annual meeting.*



# Healthy Maine Talks

MPHA's podcast, Healthy Maine Talks, highlights people across Maine who are working to make their communities healthier and safer. The podcast hit 3,000 downloads in 2025 and was ranked among the top 80 public health podcasts on the web by the PR service, MillionPodcasts.

Thank you to New England Public Health Training Center for its generous support of Healthy Maine Talks.

## Top downloaded episodes of 2025

"The science is that prolonged exposure [to high potency cannabis] leads to more possibilities of having healthcare risks, especially psychosis."-**Dr. Amy Mayhew: Youth Cannabis Use and Risk of Mental Illness**

"If you get outside it's one of the best ways to counter seasonal affective disorder, and it's also just fun."-**Pollinator Series: Penobscot River Trails, Nature & Health**

"We've really had to dig in and think of innovative ways of helping to support and engage people."-**Special Episode: Responding to Bangor's HIV Outbreak**



Matt interviews a Sea Dogs game attendee, asking "What do you love about public health" for Healthy Maine Talks

Our most downloaded episode of 2025 featured **Dr. Brian C. Castrucci: How Do We "Sell" Public Health?**

"It's the communication, it's not the product. Our public health workforce is amazing, our interventions work, we've proven this. Now it's about getting people to understand what public health is, and sharing that we're not the 'no fun police.'" *Fun tidbit, this episode is being used in health communications classes at the Johns Hopkins' Bloomberg School of Public Health!*



# Training and Workforce Development

In 2025, MPHA continued its monthly webinar series, covering issues like cancer prevention, music and health, and maternal and child health. The series, supported by the New England Public Health Training Center, provides public health workers in Maine and across the U.S. (even internationally!) with critical knowledge about public health issues they can use in their own communities.

In addition to the monthly webinar series, MPHA also trained dozens of students and public health professionals in advocacy and communications skills, and co-hosted a series of public health career panels and networking events at Bowdoin College, Colby College, Bates College, University of New England, and University of Maine, Orono.

## Policy Ambassadors Program

We revamped the Policy Ambassadors Program this year, turning it into a hands-on advocacy bootcamp for MPHA members. Seven public health professionals were admitted into the program. They learned skills that they immediately put into practice, including writing letters to the editor, holding advocacy meetings with legislators, submitting testimony, and more. This group played a major role in moving forward MPHA's state policy priorities in 2025.



*MPHA members, Hannah Siladi (a 2025 MPHA Policy Ambassadors Program participant), Isaac Benowitz and Randy Domina, attend meetings with Maine's federal delegation in Washington D.C.*

## Training Future Public Health Leaders

Thanks to a generous gift from Qualidigm, MPHA hosted two Fellows in Healthcare Quality this year. The Fellows investigated substance use among college athletes and PFAS in Maine.

We also hosted two MPH student interns. Students learned about podcasting, supported the work of the Healthy States Collaborative, and analyzed Maine state plans that relate to health.

# 2025 Annual Meeting

## *Connections Build Health: Sparking Conversations, Strengthening Communities*



*Right: New York Times bestselling author and historian, Colin Woodard, gives his keynote speech, “The Regional Geography of Health and Well-Being in the United States.”*

MPHA's annual conference is the largest public health gathering in Maine. The 2025 conference brought together 500 attendees - a record-breaking crowd - to brainstorm, learn, and engage in efforts to reduce social isolation and strengthen community connection.



*Left: Maine CDC Director, Dr. Puthiery Va, gives a snapshot of how federal policy changes are impacting Maine.*



*Right: The plenary panel featured stakeholders from across Maine who are building social connection infrastructure in their communities.*





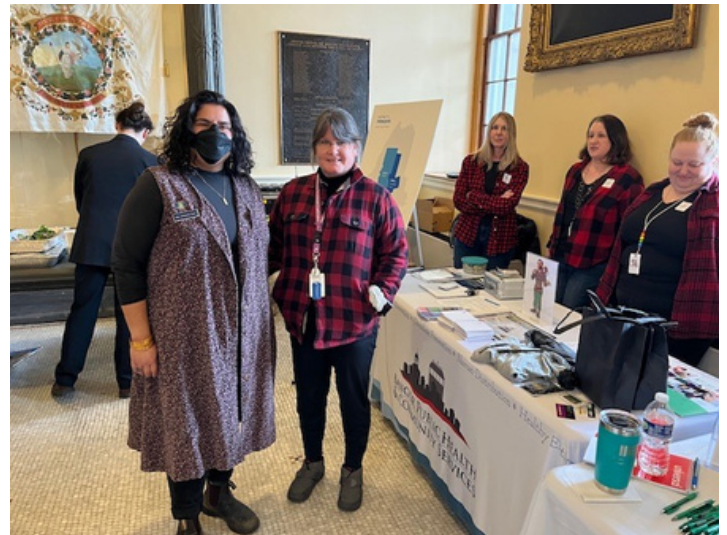
# Engaging Our Membership



*Above: Maine Audubon's Bringing Nature Home Program Manager, Andrew Tufts, speaks at May's pollinator event, "Rewilding your yard". Right: MPHA organizational member, Bangor Public Health and Community Services, speaks to legislators at MPHA's Hall of Flags event.*

## Member Section Snapshots

MPHA's member sections are an opportunity for members to use their expertise and passion to advance public health work. Check out member sections' 2025 highlights below.



## Launching New Events in 2025

MPHA hosts networking and learning events throughout the year. In 2025, we held annual staples like our conference and awards event, and introduced a new offering, the Public Health Pollinator Series. These events brought together partners and community members to learn about fun and informative health topics, and build new connections.

**Public Health Infrastructure:** Helped support passage of a new law that expands the scope and membership of local boards of health.

**Climate and Health:** Promoted a suite of educational materials about practical ways folks can make their homes and communities more climate resilient. The materials are available in 9 languages.

**Federal Advocacy:** By popular demand, MPHA launched a new section focused on federal policy and advocacy for core public health funding and infrastructure.

**Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs:** Helped advocate for increasing Maine's tobacco tax .

**Health Equity:** Assessed MPHA's new cancer prevention policy toolkit to ensure it aligns with health equity principles.

**MPHA Book Club:** MPHA launched its first member book club in 2025! The first quarterly meeting was held in October. This community-focused section brings people together to discuss books that explore public health, well-being, and other factors shaping the health of our communities.



# Growing Our Membership

MPHA members are core to fulfilling the Association's mission. We ended 2025 with nearly 950 individual members and 80 organizational members - a 14% jump from 2024!

What's even more compelling than MPHA's membership size is its diversity. MPHA represents environmental organizations, public health departments, businesses, and so many more stakeholders across the state who are working to make their communities safer and healthier.



"MPHA creates a huge positive ripple effect on the health of individuals in local communities, throughout the state of Maine and nationally. MPHA focuses on advocacy, education and partnerships at all the levels, from grassroots to national, which reinforces the role we all play to make a difference. This makes and keeps me hopeful." --***Tara Pelletier, MPHA member and donor***

"Forty years ago in 1984, I was one of 19 individuals who signed the official document creating the Maine Public Health Association. Since then, MPHA has matured and grown into a dynamic, diverse, and highly effective organization, leading the way, along with many partners, on the many critical issues impacting our state".

**-Deb Deatrick, MPHA Past President and MPHA donor**



# Thank You

In 2024 and 2025, two MPHA past-presidents and long-time board members, retired from the board.

Ed Miller, a charter member, has supported MPHA for 40+ years, serving as the Association's honorary historian and possessing extensive institutional knowledge. Ed has been instrumental in MPHA's growth and sustainability, and offered keen insight to our advocacy strategy.

After 12 years of serving on the Board, Doug Michael stepped off in fall 2025, looking forward to spending more time with family and friends in the Maine outdoors. During Doug's tenure, the Association hired its first full-time Executive Director and Associate Director, strengthened its governance and operations, and embarked on a multi-year strategy to expand its membership and voice in crucial public policy decisions.

**Thank you, Ed and Doug, for your service to MPHA, and to Maine. You have left an indelible mark!**



"I guess you could say I was there at the birth of MPHA. I was working for the Maine Bureau of Health (predecessor of the Maine CDC ) when the idea of forming MPHA was raised. These were the days when few people knew what public health was or the difference between public health and medical care. In the words of the Grateful Dead 'What a long strange trip it's been!'

I am proud to be a charter member of MPHA, a past Board member, past President and financial supporter. When I hear of the number of current members I can't help but smile at such growth. It's the result of hard working volunteers and capable, competent and committed staff.

Over the years, MPHA has earned a reputation for leadership and excellence in efforts to improve and protect the health of people in Maine. Never has the mission been more important or the organization more necessary and worthy of our support."--**Ed Miller**

"I am so proud of MPHA's leadership advancing evidence-based public health policies in Maine and Washington, and its ongoing commitment to strengthening the public health workforce.

Serving with the diverse MPHA board and alongside its incredible staff team has been the highlight of my public health career! I'm glad my open board spot has made room for new people and ideas to engage in our shared work.

I look forward to continuing my support of MPHA by volunteering and making an annual donation. I hope others will join me."--**Doug Michael**





# With Gratitude to Our Supporters

Thank You to the following organizations for their generous support of MPHA in 2025, including support of our 41st Annual Meeting.

Green indicates organizational membership.

## 2025 GRANT FUNDING

Harold Alfond Center for the Advancement of Maine's  
Workforce

American Public Health Association

The Betterment Fund

The Bingham Program

Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids

Island Foundation

Maine Cancer Foundation

Maine Community Foundation

Maine Health Access Foundation

Maine Public Health Training Center/Maine AHEC

New England Public Health Training Center

Howard and Geraldine Polinger Family Foundation

Seattle Foundation, Islands Fund

Scott Family Fund





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Green indicates organizational membership.

## **GOLD SUPPORTER (\$10,000)**

MaineHealth

## **SILVER SUPPORTERS (\$5,000+)**

Children's Oral Health Network of Maine  
UNE School of Public and Planetary Health  
UMaine Institute of Medicine

## **BRONZE SUPPORTERS (\$3,000+)**

ADEPT Educational Institute of  
Maine  
City of Portland Public Health  
Division  
Maine Cancer Foundation  
MaineGeneral Health

MCD Global Health  
Maine Technology Institute  
New England Public Health  
Training Center  
Northern Light Health  
University of Southern Maine



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## **FRIEND SUPPORTERS (<\$3,000)**

3iHousing of Maine  
American Cancer Society-Cancer Action Network  
American Heart Association, ME  
American Lung Association, ME  
Androscoggin Bank  
Auburn, ME  
Bangor Public Health and Community Services  
Bath Area Family YMCA  
Bath-Brunswick Respite Care  
Be SMART  
Bicycle Coalition of Maine  
Blaisdell Consulting  
Boston University School of Public Health  
Broachreach Public Relations  
Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids  
Cary Medical Center  
Catholic Charities Office of Maine  
Refugee Services  
Christine B Foundation  
Co-Occurring Collaborative Serving Maine  
Coastal Healthy Communities Coalition  
Community Care Partnership of Maine  
Community Caring Collaborative  
Community Health Options  
Consumers for Affordable Health Care

CSL Seqirus  
Cumberland County, Maine  
Defend Our Health  
Deterra, by Verde Technologies  
Disability Rights Maine  
Ethos Marketing & Design  
Full Plates Full Potential  
Good Shepherd Food Bank  
Goodwill of Northern New England  
Groups Recover Together  
GrowSmart Maine  
GSK Vaccines  
Hannaford Supermarkets  
Harvard School of Public Health  
HealthReach Community Health Centers  
Healthy Acadia  
Healthy Androscoggin  
Healthy Communities of the Capital Area  
Healthy Living for ME  
Help Me Grow  
Horch Roofing  
Hospice of Southern Maine  
Journey Magazine  
LymeTV  
Maine Affordable Housing Coalition  
Maine Allcare  
Maine Breast and Cervical Health Program  
Maine CDC Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program



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## **FRIEND SUPPORTERS (<\$3,000)**

Maine Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics	Merck
Maine Children's Alliance	Milestone Recovery
Maine Community Foundation	MMC Preventive Medicine
Maine CHW Initiative	Enhancement for Maine Program
Maine Conservation Voters	Natural Resources Council of Maine
Maine Council on Aging	New Mainers Public Health Initiative
Maine Development Foundation	New Season
Maine Environmental Education Association	Northeast Delta Dental
Maine Family Planning	Oasis Free Clinics
Maine Immunization Coalition	Partnerships for Health
Maine Indoor Air Quality Council	passivhausMAINE
Maine Initiatives	Penobscot Community Health Center
Maine Medical Association	PSR Maine
Maine Mobile Health Program	Public Health Partners
Maine Network of Healthy Communities	Rinck Advertising
Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association	Ronald McDonald House Charities
Maine Pediatric and Behavioral Health Partnership	Spurwink Services
Maine Public Health Training Center	The Roux Institute
Maine State Breastfeeding Coalition	University of Maine at Farmington
Maine Youth Thriving	Community and Public Health Major
MaineCare	UNE Graduate Programs in Public Health
MaineGeneral's Peter Alfond Prevention & Healthy Living Center	Volunteers of America, Northern New England
Mainely Vinyl	Western Maine Community Action
Market Decisions Research	WIC Maine
MedHelp Maine	WinterKids
	Yarmouth Public Health Council
	York Hospital





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Thank You to the following individuals for their generous support of MPHA in 2025, including making an additional donation when they renewed their membership, supporting our annual awards ceremony, providing scholarships for student memberships, or donating as part of our annual appeal.

## 2025 MPHA INDIVIDUAL SUPPORTERS

### **\$5,000+**

ANONYMOUS  
KATHERINE BOURNE & MARK MUNGER

### **\$2,000+**

DRS. TARA K. PELLETIER AND SCOTT MORIN  
TORY ROGERS

### **\$1,000+**

LINDA J. FRAZIER AND PETER B. DITMANSON  
TAMMY NESIN AND NOAH NESIN  
DENISE AND SHELDON TEPLER

### **\$500+**

BARBARA CROWLEY, MD  
SARAH & JEREMY GABRIELSON  
JAY KNOWLTON AND BLAKE MCCARTNEY  
SHARON MCDONNELL & GIB PARRISH  
DOUG MICHAEL & KIM CHILDS  
PETER MILLARD & EMILY WESSON  
HOLLY RICHARDS, MPH, CHES  
LEO WATERSTON



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## 2025 MPHA INDIVIDUAL SUPPORTERS CONT.

### **\$250+**

JOANNE AND RICHARD COHEN  
MARY BUTLER FLEMING  
HON. JAY MCCREIGHT  
ANGELA COLE WESTHOFF

### **\$100-\$249**

NANCY BIRKHIMER  
NED CLAXTON  
DEBORAH DEATRICK  
DAVID HARDER  
DAVID JOLLY  
EMILY KELLER

DOUGLAS KLAUCKE  
KIM LARAMY  
SIMON PERRY  
SARAH RINES  
STEPHEN SEARS  
SYDNEY R. SEWALL, MD, MPH  
EDWARD WALWORTH MD

### **UNDER \$100**

ANONYMOUS (2)  
DINA BROCHU  
ALLEN F. BROWNE  
JOHN DICKENS  
LEE ANNE DODGE  
RUTH DUFRESNE  
JUDITH FEINSTEIN  
LU'ANN GARZA

BENI LAPIKA  
RACHAEL MAHAR  
WHITNEY PARRISH PERRY  
MARY PRYBYLO  
ELIZA WARREN GIBERSON  
JADA WENSMAN  
JEANNE WISHENGRAD  
CAROL ZECHMAN



# With Gratitude to Our Supporters

**WE ARE ALSO GRATEFUL TO MEMBERS OF MPHA'S BOARD FOR THEIR  
GENEROUS SUPPORT IN 2025.**

## **Executive Committee**

Leo Waterston, MA  
(President)  
Holly Richards, MPH, CHES  
(Vice-President)  
Jay McCreight, MSED  
(Secretary)  
Simon Perry, MBA  
(Treasurer)  
Jay Knowlton, MPH  
(Past-President)

## **At-Large Members**

Mary Butler-Fleming  
Angela Fochesato  
Lu'Ann Garza, CGMS  
David Harder, MS, PHD

## **At-Large Members cont.**

Kim Laramy  
Rachael Mahar, RN, BSN, CLC  
Noah Negin, MD  
Denise Tepler, MA  
Eliza Warren Giberson  
Jada Wensman

**Affiliate Representative to the  
Governing Council (ARGC) of APHA**  
Sarah Rines

## **Non-Voting Members**

Stephen Sears, MD, MPH  
(Clinical Advisor)  
Nancy Birkhimer, MPH  
(Maine CDC Liaison)

Thank you to outgoing board members, Maye Emlein, JD, MPH, Doug Michael, MPH, and Clay Graybeal, PhD, MSW for their service!