



Maine Public Health Association

ANNUAL REPORT

2025



Our Mission

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.

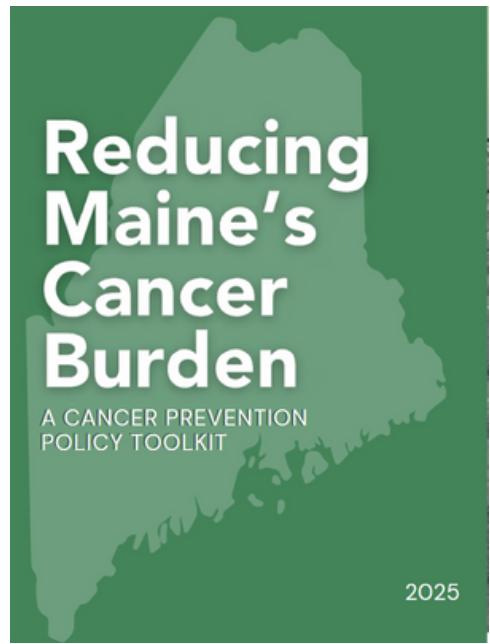
Leading the Collaborative has launched MPHA into the national spotlight as a trusted partner working to protect federal public health funding and programs that matter to Maine and communities all over the country.



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 Deatrict, 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
Dettura, 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
Maine Children's Alliance
Maine Community Foundation
Maine CHW Initiative
Maine Conservation Voters
Maine Council on Aging
Maine Development Foundation
Maine Environmental Education Association
Maine Family Planning
Maine Immunization Coalition
Maine Indoor Air Quality Council
Maine Initiatives
Maine Medical Association
Maine Mobile Health Program
Maine Network of Healthy Communities
Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association
Maine Pediatric and Behavioral Health Partnership
Maine Public Health Training Center
Maine State Breastfeeding Coalition
Maine Youth Thriving
MaineCare
MaineGeneral's Peter Alfond Prevention & Healthy Living Center
Mainely Vinyl
Market Decisions Research
MedHelp Maine
Merck
Milestone Recovery
MMC Preventive Medicine
Enhancement for Maine Program
Natural Resources Council of Maine
New Mainers Public Health Initiative
New Season
Northeast Delta Dental
Oasis Free Clinics
Partnerships for Health
passivhausMAINE
Penobscot Community Health Center
PSR Maine
Public Health Partners
Rinck Advertising
Ronald McDonald House Charities
Spurwink Services
The Roux Institute
University of Maine at Farmington Community and Public Health Major
UNE Graduate Programs in Public Health
Volunteers of America, Northern New England
Western Maine Community Action
WIC 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	DOUGLAS KLAUCKE
NED CLAXTON	KIM LARAMY
DEBORAH DEATRICK	SIMON PERRY
DAVID HARDER	SARAH RINES
DAVID JOLLY	STEPHEN SEARS
EMILY KELLER	SYDNEY R. SEWALL, MD, MPH
	EDWARD WALWORTH MD

UNDER \$100

ANONYMOUS (2)	BENI LAPIKA
DINA BROCHU	RACHAEL MAHAR
ALLEN F. BROWNE	WHITNEY PARRISH PERRY
JOHN DICKENS	MARY PRYBYLO
LEE ANNE DODGE	ELIZA WARREN GIBERSON
RUTH DUFRESNE	JADA WENSMAN
JUDITH FEINSTEIN	JEANNE WISHENGRAD
LU'ANN GARZA	CAROL ZECHMAN



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**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 Nesin, 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!