

LD 1658 & LD 1772

Secure the Fund for a Healthy Maine for the Future Support Public Health Planning and Policymaking

The Fund for a Healthy Maine (FHM) is an incredible success story and reflects the best qualities of Maine people. It has an innovative, interconnected, and youth-focused design; responsible alignment with the purpose of the 1998 tobacco settlement; prudent recognition that prevention is always the best medicine; and 25 years of loyal and unyielding support from policymakers, stakeholder groups, and Maine people.

The FHM has been approaching a financial crossroads for several years. Maine lawmakers stepped up to protect the FHM in the current biennium with a transfer of funds from the General Fund. Taking this action in such a challenging environment acknowledges the importance of prevention for Maine people and communities. But this was a one-time solution for an ongoing problem, and public health policymakers are facing even greater challenges amid a shifting federal policy environment and the unrelenting need for public health services and supports.

LD 1658 resolves the structural deficit in the Fund for a Healthy Maine by establishing an annual and ongoing transfer of a portion of tobacco excise tax revenue from the General Fund to the FHM, giving lawmakers the resources needed each year to make baseline investments in public health and prevention. This is a straightforward solution that aligns and integrates Maine's use of tobacco excise tax revenue, which is also intended to support the health and well-being of Maine people across generations.

LD 1772 strengthens Maine's public health and prevention efforts in three important ways. First, it establishes the Maine Commission on Public Health and Prevention to assist and advise the Maine Legislature with added capacity to analyze, assess, gather information, and make policy and funding recommendations. Second, it supports the Maine CDC in developing, publishing, and promoting a comprehensive state health plan that takes a broad and integrated view of health-related conditions and strategies and gives state and local policymakers a blueprint to prepare and act on opportunities, trends, and emergent risks. Third, it establishes the FHM Stabilization Account, which integrates stronger fiscal practices and improves the Fund's financial stability and readiness to maintain prevention programs during future downturns in revenue or reductions in federal support for public health programs.

The value and necessity of prevention and public health do not change with legislators and administrations. Rather, these are constants that must be met with stable funding and well-planned investments that meet the needs and circumstances of people and communities. Stabilizing the FHM financially and supporting public health planning and policymaking will secure Maine's investment in prevention and position us to be strong and responsive to future health concerns.

We, the undersigned members of the *Blue Ribbon Commission to Design a Plan for Sustained Investment in Preventing Disease and Improving the Health of Maine Communities*, support the amended versions of LD 1658 and LD 1772 to secure the financial health of the Fund for a Healthy Maine and support public health planning and policymaking.

Keith Bisson, Coastal Enterprises, Inc.

Liz Blackwell Moore, Cumberland County Public Health

Rebecca Boulos, Maine Public Health Association

Alex Carter, Maine Equal Justice

Barbara Crowley, MD

Elsie Flemings, Healthy Acadia

Barbara Leonard

Linda Sanborn, MD

Yvonne Jonk, Maine Rural Health Research Center