

MPHA

Maine Public Health Association

ANNUAL REPORT

2024



WWW.MAINEPUBLICHEALTH.ORG

Mission

Our mission: Advance the health and well-being of all people and places in Maine.

Who We Are

For 40 years, Maine Public Health Association has worked to ensure the health of all people and places in Maine. We represent more than 800 individual members and 70 organizations across the state, and we advance our mission through advocacy, workforce development, and multi-sector collaboration.

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 and health equity.
- Engage members in our work.

MPHA has longstanding partnerships with several public health organizations across the state and is an affiliated association of the American Public Health Association (APHA). APHA is the national voice of public health and champions the health of all people and communities. Learn more at www.apha.org.

A Message from MPHA's Executive Director & Board President

Dear MPHA Members, Supporters & Friends:

Last year marked Maine Public Health Association's 40th anniversary. While we reflected on our 40-year history, we also celebrated this milestone by looking forward. Maine is growing, and the challenges facing our communities - climate change, mental health, gun violence and more - are complex and interconnected. That's why MPHA launched a major building and expansion effort. We'll grow as Maine grows so that we can meet challenges head on, advance health and well-being, and serve as a resource for communities across the state.

2024 was a record breaking year for the Association. We hired our third full-time staff member, and our membership grew to an all-time high of 800+ individual and 70 organizational members, representing a broad swath of stakeholders. The 40th annual conference saw the largest attendance ever, with nearly 500 people coming together to discuss innovations in public health. Lastly, we raised 6 times what we do in a typical year from an incredibly generous group of individual donors.

Last year, MPHA advocated for policies to improve health, serving as an expert voice on issues like reducing youth tobacco use, sustainably funding public health programs, and making the cannabis industry more transparent and responsible. The Association also worked alongside partners to pass historic gun safety legislation.

Looking ahead, we plan to tackle critical health challenges and grow the Association even further by:

- Passing legislation to expand local public health infrastructure
- Supporting efforts to sustainably and sufficiently fund state health programs
- Serving as an ally in the recognition of Wabanaki self-determination
- Advocating for policies to reduce youth substance use
- Promoting safer housing for all people in Maine

Thank you for your continued support and partnership.

Rebecca Boulos, MPH, PhD
Executive Director

Leo Waterston, MA
Board President

Advocating for Health

In 2024, we helped advance policies that will protect the health and well-being of all people in Maine. Check out the highlights below and our full [131st Legislature Policy Report](#) here.

Holding cannabis companies accountable

We successfully defeated several bad policies that would've opened the door to increased youth use of high potency cannabis, which can have serious health impacts on their mental health.

Not letting tobacco companies off the hook

We helped close a loophole that allowed newer, highly addictive tobacco products like ZYN to skirt taxes. Now all tobacco products are taxed equally, which will help reduce overall youth tobacco use. We also worked with the state to clarify pharmacy guidance so that tobacco users under 21 can still access tobacco cessation medication.



Historic Gun Safety Legislation

MPHA worked alongside the Maine Gun Safety Coalition to pass historic pieces of legislation to prevent gun violence in our communities, a 72 hour waiting period on firearm purchases, expanded background checks, and funding to establish more crisis receiving centers across the state.

Left: Becca Boulos, MPHA's Executive Director, with Senator Jill Duson (D-Cumberland), sponsor of legislation to end flavored tobacco sales.

Raising Visibility for Health



In 2024, our staff and members raised visibility in the media about the importance of community connection, shared expertise about substance use policy, climate resilience and more
Check out some of the highlights:

WMTW 10/2/24--“If we work together we can promote the health and well-being of all people and places in Maine,”
Matt Wellington, MPHA Associate Director

These devices are hazardous waste, but there’s nowhere to safely throw them out in Maine--**Bangor Daily News 10/14/24**

“[E-cigarettes] pollute our environment with toxic chemicals and are a major cost to consumers and municipalities to figure out how to properly dispose of them,” Matt Wellington, MPHA Associate Director

“Opinion: A responsible cannabis industry in Maine – if we can keep it”--**Portland Press Herald 5/6/24**

“We can have a thriving and responsible cannabis industry in Maine, but only if our policymakers establish reasonable guardrails. Right now, lawmakers are letting the fox guard the henhouse, and that has to change,” Rebecca Boulos, MPHA Executive Director

Serving As An Expert Voice

In addition to engaging directly through legislative advocacy, we also served on several statewide government committees including:

- Maine Climate Council’s Community Resilience Working Group (co-lead)
- Maine Climate Council’s Equity Subcommittee
- PFAS Fund Advisory Committee (Health Subcommittee co-lead)
- Blue Ribbon Commission to Design a Plan for Sustained Investment in Preventing Disease and Improving the Health of Maine Communities

Coalitions and Partnership

One of MPHA's biggest strengths is our diverse network of partners that we work with to achieve significant gains for Maine's overall health and well-being. Here are some highlights from our coalition work this past year:

Reducing youth tobacco use

The Flavors Hook Kids Maine coalition's mission is to end the sale of flavored tobacco products that attract and hook kids into a potentially life-long struggle with tobacco addiction. MPHA serves as an expert spokesperson in the coalition, sharing research and other information with lawmakers and partners about the toll of tobacco use in Maine and the evidence-based policy solutions to address it.



Pictured above: Beth Ahearn, Director of Government Affairs for Maine Conservation Voters, speaks at a press event about ending flavored tobacco sales to reduce pollution.

Promoting environmental health

We were proud to be appointed to the steering committee of the Environmental Priorities Coalition last year. The EPC is a cross-sector coalition of nearly 40 organizations that align efforts each legislative session to pass policies that will conserve the environment, combat climate change, and improve environmental health.

The Alliance for Responsible Cannabis in Maine (ARC-ME)

In 2024, MPHA established ARC-ME, a new multi-sector coalition working to prevent youth cannabis use, protect patient health, and ensure safety, accountability and transparency in the cannabis industry.

Recognizing Wabanaki Sovereignty

The Wabanaki Alliance is a coalition of more than 200 organizations, businesses, and other stakeholders in support of recognizing Wabanaki sovereignty. This year, we worked alongside the Wabanaki Alliance to lift up their message in the media, as well as in the halls of Augusta.

National Leadership

MPHA engages in public health work at the national level as an affiliate of the American Public Health Association. In 2024, APHA's Center for Climate, Health and Equity recognized Maine Public Health Association with its Excellence in Climate Leadership Award.

As this year's award winner, MPHA was honored for its work to advance evidence-based climate policies, train the public health workforce in climate science and strategies, and elevate the voices of communities most impacted by climate change in efforts to promote climate resiliency and response in Maine.

MPHA Executive Director, Becca Boulos, was also appointed Chair of the APHA Action Board. In her role, Becca will help engage affiliates across the country on federal advocacy related to core public health issues like infrastructure and funding.

The MPHA team taking part in the APHA Keep it Moving Challenge



Above: Becca Boulos receives APHA's Excellence in Climate Leadership Award.



Healthy Maine Talks

MPHA's monthly podcast, Healthy Maine Talks, highlights people across Maine who are working to make their communities safer and healthier. The podcast hit 1,000 downloads in 2024! You can find it on all major streaming platforms. Thank you to New England Public Health Training Center for their generous support of Healthy Maine Talks.



Healthy Maine Talks

Here's a rundown of our most popular episodes from 2024:

“We noticed a number of resident rights violations, which can be the most serious, that can include abuse and neglect.”--**Rose Lundy: Investigating Maine's Long-term Care System**

“You really can't deal with nature and the environment and place without engaging with the people that inhabit [a place] and use it for recreation or work.”--**Gabriela Alcalde MPH, DrPH: The Sewall Foundation's Theory of Change**

“Every year our top priority is increasing and protecting funding for vital public health programs and agencies.”--**Special Episode: Post-Election Public Health Landscape with Don Hoppert from the American Public Health Association**



One of our most listened to episodes of 2024 covered the PFAS spill in Brunswick, when more than 1,000 gallons of AFFF firefighting foam accidentally discharged into the environment. Craig W. Douglas, PE, General Manager of the Brunswick & Topsham Water District, joined Healthy Maine Talks to share accurate information with the public during the crisis.

Training and Workforce Development



Above: Dr. Puthiery Va, Maine CDC Director, and our panelists at the Public Health Careers Networking Event that MPHA co-hosted with MaineHealth and Bowdoin's Student Public Health Club

In addition to the monthly webinar series, MPHA also held a day-long virtual summit on the connection between clean drinking water and public health, an advocacy training for college students, and a series of public health career panels and networking events at Bowdoin College, Colby College, and Bates College.

Thanks to a generous endowment gift from Qualidigm, MPHA also hosted its first MPHA/Qualidigm Fellow in Healthcare Quality this year, Leslie Lorentzen. Leslie worked with Community Health Workers to gauge literacy in climate and health issues, and created a toolkit for CHW's to use in their patient interactions.

In 2024, MPHA continued its monthly webinar series, covering issues like gun safety, youth cannabis use, and more. 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 on public health issues that they can use in their own communities.



“Through my internship, I learned how to be an outspoken advocate for the causes I am passionate about, and I will take this knowledge with me through the rest of my life.”--Emily Walsh, Bates College senior and MPHA intern who was supported NEPHTC's Health Equity Stipend Program.

2024 Annual Meeting Innovations in Public Health



MPHA's annual conference is the largest public health gathering in Maine. Last year's conference brought together nearly 500 stakeholders to brainstorm, learn, and engage in solutions to promote health and well-being.

Right: Keynote speaker, Dr. Mehul Dalal, Chief Policy Advisor for the Connecticut Department of Social Services, shares real world examples of thinking outside of the box to improve health outcomes.



Left: A vibrant poster session encouraged discussion and new connections



Right: The plenary panel featured stakeholders from across Maine who are working to build social connection in their communities.



Engaging Our Membership



MPHA events are a great way to network with other members of the public health community, establish connections, and celebrate our work. In 2024, we held annual staples like our conference and awards ceremony, and newer offerings like a member outing at the Portland Sea Dogs opening game, and winter gathering (pictured left).

The Association's member sections are an opportunity for members to use their expertise and passion to advance public health work.

Check out member sections' 2024 highlights below.

Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs: Laid the groundwork for a renewed push by MPHA to educate policymakers about cancer prevention.

Climate and Health: Drafted a suite of materials for towns and cities to educate residents about practical ways they can make their homes and communities more climate resilient.

Health Promotion and Education: Formerly known as the Obesity section, the members deliberated and changed the name to be more reflective of their work. Moving forward, the member section will advocate for policies that promote healthy eating and active living.

Health Equity: Launched an effort to draft a framework for the Association to use in its policy decisions to ensure that all policy-related work advances health equity.

Public Health Infrastructure: Drafted and circulated an informal assessment of local public health's experience/lessons learned during the emergency phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. Results from the assessment will inform future projects.



The ATOD section meets to map out MPHA's new cancer prevention toolkit

Growing Our Membership

MPHA members are core to fulfilling the Association's mission. That's why it's a testament to the Association's work that we ended 2024 with a record breaking 800+ individual members and 70 organizational members.

What's even more compelling than the 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.

“Maine Public Health Association is an invaluable partner in supporting health care systems as they collaborate with communities to promote health and well-being and address health disparities. By building connections, sharing knowledge, and advancing policies, MPHA bridges the gap between clinical care and community wellness, fostering health equity and sustainable improvements in population health.”--**Anne Conners, MaineGeneral Health Director, Community Health Department**



“MPHA membership has provided me the opportunity to connect with peers and mentors in the public health field. Participation in member sections has allowed me to form valuable new partnerships and engage in discussions around public health policy to continue advancing the field.”-**Lexi Perry, Prevention Specialist**

Thank You

This year MPHA launched a major expansion effort to celebrate our 40 year history and build for the future. As part of that effort we set a goal of raising \$40,000 over our previous year's budget, with at least half of it coming from individual donors. Thanks to more than 60 individual givers, we far exceeded those goals.

The resources we raise from individual donors go toward our Future Fund, which helps MPHA pursue its long-term goals and allows the organization to take on special initiatives or respond to unforeseen challenges. The Fund provides a vehicle through which supporters can invest in the future and leave a lasting legacy for Maine's public health community. Thank you all for your generosity and partnership!



“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 Deatruck, MPHA Past President and MPHA donor



Above Photos: MPHA's Donor Appreciation Event



With Gratitude to Our Supporters

Thank You to the following organizations for their generous support of MPHA in 2024, including support of our 40th Annual Meeting.

Green indicates organizational membership.

2024 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
Islands Fund
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
Elmina B. Sewall Foundation
Scott Family Fund

GOLD SUPPORTER (\$10,000)

MaineHealth

BRONZE SUPPORTERS (\$3,000+)

AdCare Educational Institute of Maine	MCD Global Health
Bangor Public Health and Community Services	Northern Light Health
MaineGeneral Health	Portland Public Health
Market Decisions Research	Puritan Medical Products
Maine Technology Institute	University of Southern Maine
	UMaine Institute of Medicine

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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
AstraZeneca
Auburn, ME
Bangor Public Health and Community Services
Bath-Brunswick Respite Care
BeSmart
Bicycle Coalition of Maine
Blaisdell Consulting
Boston University School of Public Health
Cary Medical Center
Catholic Charities Office of Maine Refugee Services
Children's Oral Health Network
City of Portland, Portland Public Health Division
Coastal Healthy Communities Coalition
Community Caring Collaboration
Community Health Options
Consumers for Affordable Health Care
Cumberland County, Maine
CSL Seqirus
Defend Our Health
Disability Rights Maine
Ethos Marketing & Design
Full PlatesFull Potential
Good Shepherd Food Bank
Goodwill of Northern New England
Groups Recover Together
GrowSmart Maine
GSK Vaccines
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
Hospice of Southern Maine
LymeTV
Maine Affordable Housing Coalition
Maine Allcare
Maine Conservation Voters
Maine Council on Aging
Maine Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics
Maine CDC Lead Poisoning Prevention Program
Maine CDC Breast and Cervical Health Program
Maine CHW Initiative
Maine Development Foundation
Maine Environmental Education Association

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FRIEND SUPPORTERS (<\$3,000) CONT.

Maine Family Planning
Maine Gun Safety Coalition
Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition
Maine Indoor Air Quality Council
Maine Initiatives
Maine Medical Association
Maine Network of Healthy
Communities
Maine State Breastfeeding Coalition
Maine Youth Thriving
MMC Preventive Medicine
Enhancement for Maine Program
New Mainers Public Health Initiative
Northeast Delta Dental
Oasis Free Clinics
Partnerships for Health
passivhausMAINE
Patagonia Health
Penobscot Community Health Care
Pfizer
Pharming
Project REACH: Research Evidence-
to-Action for Community Health
PSR Maine

Public Health Partners
ReVision Energy
The Resurgam Group
The Roux Institute
The Ridge
Rinck Advertising
Ronald McDonald House Charities
Safe Communities Coalition
Sanofi
University of New England Center for
Excellence in Public Health
UNE Graduate Programs in Public
Health
Volunteers of America, Northern New
England
Western Maine Community Action
WinterKids
York Hospital



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2024 MPHA INDIVIDUAL SUPPORTERS

\$2,000

KATHERINE BOURNE & MARK MUNGER

\$1,000+

JOANNE AND RICHARD COHEN

BARBARA CROWLEY, MD

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JOHN LACASSE

MARKET DECISIONS RESEARCH

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SHELDON AND DENISE TEPLER

ANGELA COLE WESTHOFF

\$500+

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2024 MPHA INDIVIDUAL SUPPORTERS CONT.

\$250+

ANONYMOUS (1)
MOLLIE BARNATHAN
KIP DESERRES
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JAY MCCREIGHT
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\$100-\$249

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UNDER \$100

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EMILY RINES
SARAH RINES
JUDITH TUPPER

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WE ARE ALSO GRATEFUL TO MEMBERS OF MPHA'S BOARD FOR THEIR GENEROUS SUPPORT IN 2024

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(President)
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(Vice-President)
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Noah Nesen, MD
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Sarah Rines

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Nancy Birkhimer, MPH
(Maine CDC Liaison)