Good afternoon Senator Brakey, Representative Gattine and Esteemed members of Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Shawn Yardley and I am here today representing the Friends of the Fund for a Healthy Maine. We are a coalition comprised of over 100 people and organizations dedicated to the protection of the Fund for a Healthy Maine- Maine’s share of tobacco settlement dollars.

Thank you for giving me time to testify in support LD 905 today.

Fifteen years ago, the 119th Legislature acknowledged the special purpose of the tobacco settlement money: that Maine people got sick and died from tobacco addiction and we needed to honor their memory and prevent future generations from making the same deadly mistakes. They showed tremendous wisdom in creating the Fund for a Healthy Maine, with its eight, necessary and evidence-based categories on which the tobacco dollars would be spent. What the 119th Legislature established was truly visionary; by investing in the prevention of disease and promotion of good health today they knew we would reduce health costs in the long run.

And they were right. Because of the declines we have seen in smoking over the past 15 years, 36,360 fewer kids alive today in Maine will grow up to be addicted adult smokers and 24,070 fewer of today’s residents in Maine will ultimately die prematurely from smoking. In addition, ongoing improvements in public health from smoking declines have secured the 1 billion, two hundred and ninety-one million, 700 thousand dollar reductions in healthcare costs.

The good news is we don’t need to guess at what works and what doesn’t when it comes to preventing addiction and disease while promoting good health- there are volumes of research. We have the answers. The Federal CDC, the US Surgeon General, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and others all agree that what changes behavior and lowers health care costs is the combination of primary care, community public health and policy. It would not be difficult to alter the course and get back on the track of effective programming and policy change and start to see more rapid positive population health outcomes.

As you may know, at the end of 2011, there was a Fund for a Healthy Maine legislative commission that met three times and filed a report with a list of eight unanimous recommendations (link- http://www.maine.gov/legis/opla/fhmstudy.htm). A few of these recommendations have been implemented but many have not. LD 905 would allow a new commission to continue study of the Fund, its allocations, successes, challenges and adherence to intent of the Fund.

The Friends of the Fund endorse this bill because we are confident in the work that has been accomplished thus far and are supportive of studying of current allocations as well as current data and research. We believe the more someone understands public health, prevention and the role the Fund for a Healthy Maine plays in sustaining the health of all Mainers, the more support the Fund will receive.

On behalf of the Friends of the Fund for a Healthy Maine, I urge you to vote Ought to Pass on LD 905 and thank you for your support of preventing disease and controlling healthcare costs.