Testimony of Friends of the Fund for a Healthy Maine

In opposition to

LR 2847, The Governor’s Second Supplemental Budget

Senator Rosen, Representative Flood and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs; Senator McCormick, Representative Strang Burgess and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services; I am Becky Smith. I am here today in opposition to the Fund for a Healthy Maine provisions in LR 2847 on behalf of the Friends of the Fund for a Healthy Maine. We are a statewide coalition of more than 150 organizations ranging from hospitals to businesses to nonprofit agencies and towns.

As you well know, when Maine’s share of the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement was set to arrive, the 119th Legislature acknowledged the special purpose of the money and created the Fund for a Healthy Maine, with its evidence-based public health categories on which the tobacco dollars would be spent. Their legacy continues to this day – investing in the prevention of disease and promotion of good health now in order to reduce health costs in the long run. This strategic long-term thinking has allowed Maine to be recognized nationally for our forethought and prudence; has raised our public health spending ranking from 48th in the nation to the middle of the pack and most importantly has led to steady progress in reducing the major cost drivers of our health care system—chronic disease and preventable health issues.

The Fund has played a large part in the following successes:

- A 64% drop in youth smoking.
- 2,400 Maine families able to maintain employment and remain off the welfare rolls because of access to a child care subsidy.
- Mainers 65 and older who have had their flu shots increased from 64% in 1995 to 75% in 2008, and pneumonia vaccinations for seniors has increased from 35% in 1995 to 72% in 2008.
- Of families participating in Maine Families Home Visiting Program for whom secondhand smoke was a concern, more than two-thirds have eliminated or reduced their child’s exposure.
• The Dental Subsidy Program supported 11 community based agencies in providing over 33,700 dental services to nearly 18,400 patients in 15 locations during 2010.
• The percent of students with an at-risk behavior, who received an intervention at a school based health center, and showed improvement by the end of the school year has steadily increased over the past four years
  o Tobacco use: 13% to 29%
  o Alcohol use: 28% to 63%
  o Other drug use: 4% to 71%.

I could continue, but you have heard this all before.

Today, the importance of the Fund could not be more apparent – Maine’s economic recovery depends on bringing down the cost of health care for the State and for businesses, and that’s what the Fund for a Healthy Maine is designed to do. This further diversion will guarantee a future of fewer healthy families, higher health care costs for all, and an economic recovery that can only limp along because we continue to avoid dealing with the incredible cost of preventable chronic disease.

As we have stated in the past, we understand the need to make difficult budget decisions. We would be happy to discuss alternative solutions that not only have the ability to raise revenue, but improve the health of Maine people and reduce cost to businesses and the State. The people of Maine are counting on legislators to protect the Fund for a Healthy Maine and keep it working as it was intended. In fact, one year ago, more than 91% of Maine people said they wanted the Fund for a Healthy Maine used ONLY for programs that prevent disease and promote good health today. They did not say that the Fund should be used to fill a hole in the General Fund.

Please oppose these shortsighted cuts to the Fund for a Healthy Maine and pass a budget that supports this important investment.

Thank you.
Friends of the Fund for a Healthy Maine

The following organizations strongly endorse efforts that will keep tobacco settlement money used as it was intended and prevent further diversions away from the Fund for a Healthy Maine.

ACCESS Health
Advocates for Children
Alliance for Children’s Care, Education and Supporting Services
American Cancer Society, NE Division
American Heart Assoc.-Founders’ Affiliate
American Lung Assoc. in Maine
American Nurses Assoc. of Maine
Androscoggin Cardiology Associates
Androscoggin Head Start & Child Care
Androscoggin Head Start and Child Care
Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield
Aroostook Council for Healthy Families
Aroostook County Action Program
Aroostook Mental Health Services
Bangor Region Public Health and Wellness
Breathe Easy Coalition of Maine
Bridgton Community Center
Bucksport Bay Healthy Communities Coal., Care Link/MRD, Inc.
Caribou City Council
Child & Family Opportunities, Inc.
Child and Family Opportunities, Inc.
Child Care Services of York County
Children’s Dental Clinic
Choose To Be Healthy
City of Portland
Coastal Enterprises, Inc.
Coastal Healthy Communities Coalition
Common Cause Maine
Community Concepts, Inc.
Consumers for Affordable Health Care
Day One
Downeast Health Services, Inc.
Downeast Healthy Tomorrows
Family Planning Assoc. of Maine
First Congregational Church
Great Works Internet
Greater Portland Chambers of Commerce
Greater Somerset Public Health Collaborative
Greater Waterville PATCH
Greater Waterville’s Communities for Children
Harrington Family Health Center
Healthways/Regional Medical Center at Lubec
Healthy Acadia
Healthy Androscoggin
Healthy Aroostook
Healthy Casco Bay
Healthy Communities of the Capital Area
Healthy Community Coalition
Healthy Lakes Region
Healthy Lincoln County
Healthy Oxford Hills
Healthy Peninsula
Healthy Portland
Healthy Rivieres Region
Healthy Waldo County
Horace Mitchell Primary School
Islands Community Medical Services, Inc.
Katahdin Area Partnership
Katahdin Valley Health Center
Kennebec Behavioral Health
Kennebec Valley Community Action Program
Kennebunkport Public Health Department
Kittery Children’s Leadership Council
Kittery School Department
Kno-Wal-Lin Homecare and Hospice
Knox County Community Health Coalition
Legal Services for the Elderly
Lewiston Public Schools
Maine AFL-CIO
Maine Alliance for Addiction Recovery
Maine Alliance to Prevent Substance Abuse
Maine Assoc. of Interdependent Neighborhoods
Maine Assoc. of School Nurses
Maine Assoc. of Substance Abuse Programs
Maine Cardiovascular Health Council
Maine Center for Public Health
Maine Chapter, National Assoc. of Social Workers
Maine Child Care Directors Assoc.
Maine Children’s Alliance
Maine Children’s Trust
Maine Co-Occurring Policy Exchange
Maine Council of Senior Citizens
Maine Council of Churches
Maine Dental Access Coalition
Maine Education Assoc.
Maine Equal Justice
Maine General Health
Maine Head Start Director’s Assoc.
Maine Hospital Assoc.
Maine Medical Assoc.
Maine Nurse Practitioners Assoc.
Maine Osteopathic Assoc.
Maine People’s Alliance
Maine Primary Care Assoc.
Maine Public Health Assoc.
Maine School Health Education Coalition
Maine Society for Respiratory Care
Maine State Chamber of Commerce
Maine State Nurses Assoc.
Maine Substance Abuse Foundation
Maine Winter Sports Center
Maine Women’s Lobby
MaineHealth
ME Assoc. of Child Abuse and Neglect
ME Assoc. of Health, Phys.Ed., Rec. & Dance
Medical Care Development
Midcoast Maine Community Action
Mid-Maine Chamber of Commerce
Milestone Foundation
MDI’s Behavioral Health Center
My Attitude Saves Kids
Northern Maine Medical Center
Partners for Healthier Communities
Partnership for a Healthy Northern Penobscot
Pen Bay Healthcare
Penobscot Community Health Center
Penobscot Dental Access Coalition
Penquis
Penquis CAP
People’s Regional Opportunity Program
Phoenix Academy of Maine
Piscataquis Public Health Council
Planned Parenthood of No. New England
Power of Prevention
River Coalition
River Valley Healthy Communities Coalition
Roman Catholic Diocese of Maine
Sebastakook Valley Healthy Communities
Serenity House
Southern Kennebec Healthy Communities
Southern Kennebec Child Development Co
St. Crox Valley Healthy Communities
Start ME Right
Teen and Young Parent Program of Knox Co.
The Community School
Town of Lincolnville
Town of Van Buren Recreation Department
Tri-County Mental Health Services
Union River Healthy Communities
United Way of Mid-Maine
University of Maine
Vital Pathways
Waldo County Dental Task Force
Waldo County Head Start
Wellspring, Inc.
Winter Kids
York County Community Action Corp.
York Hospital
Youth Promise
Voters Feel Tobacco Settlement Money Should Be Devoted To The ‘Fund For A Healthy Maine’

Maine currently receives millions of dollars per year from the tobacco industry, as part of the 1998 tobacco lawsuit settlement. This money is dedicated to the Fund for a Healthy Maine. How important is it to you personally that Maine’s tobacco settlement dollars be used only to prevent chronic disease and promote the good health of Maine people today, and reduce future health costs for businesses and families?

**Important**

- Very: 63
- Somewhat: 28
- 91

**Not important**

- 8

- Not at all: 4
- Not very: 4

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