Testimony in Support of LD 905
An Act to Study the Allocation of the Fund for a Healthy Maine
On Behalf of the Maine Public Health Association

Good afternoon Senator Brakey, Representative Gattine and Esteemed members of Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Jamie Comstock and I am a Board member of the Maine Public Health Association.

Thank you for giving me a moment to testify in support of this bill today. MPHA is an organization that represents over 400 public health professionals across the state who are dedicated to the health and well-being of all Maine residents. We are a science-based association that only weighs in on bills when we have the data or evidence to support our testimony. The Fund for a Healthy Maine is a top priority of the Maine Public Health Association because it is the State’s only source of prevention funds and it is one of the only ways we have to fund local public health in Maine.

Maine has worked hard, with legislative support, to create a strong public health infrastructure at both the state and local levels. These efforts, in combination with strong primary care, have resulted in real health improvements in the short term and promise even more in the long term. This is also this same infrastructure that helps to protect Maine people when outbreaks of disease occur and we think it is critical to the health of all Maine resident’s that we maintain this system of prevention, treatment and disease response.

The Fund for a Healthy Maine has been enormously successful. Here are just a few data highlights from four of the FHM categories, using objective and consistent data methodology:

• 48% decrease in youth smoking since the start of the FHM (24.8% in 2001 to 12.8% in 2013)
• 47% decrease in young adult smoking rate from 2004 to 2009 compared to US decline of 20%
• 56.2% of adults are now meeting physical activity recommendations, a 12% increase since 2011
• 71% decrease in alcohol use among Maine’s 6th through 12th graders since 2009
• 35% of students who smoke and were seen at a School Based Health Center reported that they reduced their smoking or quit smoking as a result of their visit.

Though we can be proud of all that has been accomplished, more can and should be done. Progress has stalled over the past four years due to massive legislative cuts, contract delays and political posturing. Progress has also been stalled due to limited programming options allowed by DHHS. It’s important to chart a path forward that fixes the problems without destroying our foundation for future success.
MPHA is in full support of formalizing a process to assess what’s working and what isn’t, what’s a priority for our communities and what’s missing the mark, and what we need to do as a state to ensure healthier families, a healthier workforce, and communities that can thrive. Where improvements can be made let’s make them and we would also assert that at the same time, let’s ensure adequate funding, timely contracts, and the most impactful work plans to enable FHM programs to do their best work.

LD 905 is the start to establishing a process for conducting an honest assessment of our collective efforts to prevent chronic disease in Maine and we full endorse this. We hope the next steps will include developing a practical, impactful, evidence-based roadmap for improving the health of Maine people so our families and businesses can prosper.

Thank you for your support of LD 905.