

# Legislative Highlights from HPP

Health Policy Partners



of Maine

*Advocating for public policies that promote healthy lifestyles and reduce and prevent chronic disease in Maine.*

**August 2009**

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## **HPP Triumphs in the First Session of the 124th Legislature**

For more than 25 years Health Policy Partners (HPP) and its predecessor, the Maine Coalition on Smoking or Health, has been advocating for many important pieces of legislation related to tobacco, obesity, and protecting the Fund for a Healthy Maine.

The first session of the 124th Legislature was a particularly successful session and undoubtedly the most notable session we have had in years.

Our three staff members

and many organizational partners had a strong hand in advocating for the passage of more than seven policies which will:

- Create smoke-free State beaches, parks, & historical sites
- Ban smoking in outdoor dining areas of bars & restaurants
- Prohibit the sale of flavored cigarettes & cigars
- Restrict the home delivery of tobacco products
- Increase consumer access to nutrition information at chain restaurants
- Track childhood obesity through BMI screenings in schools
- Study current PE practices in Maine schools to ensure that students are meeting national PE standards

We would like to thank all of our partners who helped us advance these important public health measures!

## **Health Policy Partner's Work in the News**

**June 18, 2009--Three New Laws in Maine Aim to Curb State's Obesity Rates**

**June 17, 2009--Governor Ceremonially Signs Legislation to Combat Obesity**

**June 15, 2009--Smoking No Longer OK in Maine Outdoor Dining Areas**

**May 19, 2009--Curbing Obesity in Maine**

**May 13, 2009--Calorie Posting Law Moves Forward in Maine**

**April 29, 2009--Bill Bars Smoking on Maine State Parks & Beaches**





Which option contains more calories?

"This [obesity] is a critical public health issue, especially when it comes to our children's health," said Governor Baldacci.



BMI will identify populations where prevention efforts are most needed.

## **Calorie Disclosure at Chain Restaurants Coming to Maine**

In 2003 Maine was the first state to propose menu labeling legislation. Although that bill and several other attempts over the years have failed, on June 15, 2009 Maine became the third state to pass a statewide menu labeling policy.

Speaker of the House Hannah Pingree, who served as the bill sponsor said, "This is about being transparent with information about what people are eating."

Pending federal legislation, this law will go into effect on February 1, 2011 and

will require chain restaurants with 20 or more national locations to post calories on their menus, menu boards, food display tags, and at drive thrus for the food and beverage items they regularly sell.

## **Making the Case for More PE in Schools**

The passage of LD 1407 was an important first step in moving schools towards full implementation of the PE4ME Planning Team's recommendations of at least 150 minutes per week of PE and 30 minutes per day of moderate to vigorous physical activity.

As a precursor to increasing minutes of PE, LD 1407 will require a comprehensive assessment of current PE practices and capacity to expand PE offerings in Maine schools. This data will help us understand how many students are actually meeting national PE

standards.

Using this information we will submit another bill during the Second Session of the 124th Legislature to address the gaps in schools' ability to meet these recommendations .

## **BMI Screenings in Schools Helps Maine CDC Collect Data**

Starting in the 2009-2010 school year, schools may voluntarily collect body mass index (BMI) data from school-aged children.

This data will be reported in a confidential manner to

the Maine CDC. Over time the data will help us measure the problem of obesity and the level of success of efforts aimed at combating obesity. It will also help us identify vulnerable populations and

geographic regions where obesity prevention is most needed.

If funds become available schools will be required to collect and report Body Mass Index (BMI) data.

## **No More Lighting Up in Outdoor Dining Venues**

This session a bill, proposed by Rep. Joan Cohen (D-Portland), was passed that prohibits smoking at bars and restaurants throughout the state.

The law, similar to a measure that was successfully adopted in

2008 by the City of Portland, will require all outdoor dining areas throughout the state to be smoke-free 24 hours a day.

Maine will be the third state in the nation with such a law, following the legislative actions taken by Hawaii and Iowa, as well as

more than a hundred municipalities around the country.



"It [smoke-free parks and beaches] is a way to make the great outdoors greater and reinforce the message that you can breathe easy in Maine."

-Governor Baldacci

## **Home Delivery of Tobacco Products Banned**

To prevent minors from gaining access to tobacco products, a law was created that banned the home delivery sale of tobacco products. Hand-rolled, large "premium" cigars have been exempted from the law.

Now consumers will have to purchase all non-premium tobacco items from a licensed instate tobacco retailer, thus eliminating the ability of youth to gain access to tobacco products through internet sale and delivery.



## **Maine's Beaches & Parks Go Smoke-Free**

In an act of emergency measure, a law prohibiting smoking on State-run beaches, historical sites and within 20 feet of areas at State parks where families and individuals congregate took effect on May 1, 2009. Senator John Nutting (D-Leeds) stated his bill to ban

smoking at Maine's State-run public parks and beaches stemmed from concerns about second-hand smoke and littering. This law will not impact municipal run beaches and parks, leaving municipalities to implement resolves,

policies, or ordinances that directly impact smoking activity within the confines of their own parks and beaches. "It's a way to make the great outdoors greater and reinforce the message that you can breathe easy in Maine," said Governor Baldacci.



Smoke-free beaches and parks went into effect on May 1, 2009.

# Fund for a Healthy Maine Celebrates 10 Years!

Maine has been a leader among states in having committed a substantial portion of funds from the Master Tobacco Settlement Agreement to public health. These dollars, known as the Fund for a Healthy Maine (FHM), and are used to support public health prevention measures in an effort to reduce chronic disease in Maine.

On June 4, 2009, Maine lawmakers and public health advocates celebrated the 10 year anniversary of

the creation of the Fund for a Healthy Maine .

During the celebration it was noted how the FHM directly impacts our ability to deliver essential public health services in our communities and why continued use and protection of these funds is critical. For instance, program support by the FHM have led to a 64% drop in youth smoking rates, a decrease in alcohol use among junior high and high school students, and

reductions in teen pregnancy rates by 44%. In addition, many more children are receiving immunizations, dental care, and school-based health care as a result of FHM funding.

Kevin O'Flaherty, Regional Advocacy Director for the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids said, "Maine's a national model for success. Congratulations and keep up the fight that's saving lives and lowering health costs."



## —Organizational Board Members—

- American Cancer Society, New England Division
- American Heart Association, Founders' Affiliate
- American Lung Association of Maine
- Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield of Maine
- City of Portland, Public Health Division
- Consumers for Affordable Health Care
- Maine Center for Public Health
- Maine Hospital Association
- Maine Medical Association
- Maine Osteopathic Association
- Maine Primary Care Association
- Medical Care Development

In addition to 40 other organizations that participate as members.

## **Want Real Change? Become a Member of Health Policy Partners**

Health Policy Partners is seeking thoughtful, committed people with a passion for public health policy and advocacy who want to make change happen. Our goals are to:

- Reduce smoking in Maine and protect all Maine citizens from secondhand smoke,
- Reduce the rate of childhood obesity and disease related to obesity among children and adults,
- Protect the Fund for a Healthy Maine (tobacco settlement money that funds chronic disease prevention).

**If you would like to become a member of Health Policy Partners, please call us at (207) 622-7566 x 217.**

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**The Bingham Program**