



**Testimony in Support of LD 985
An Act To Align Maine’s School Marketing Law and Current Federal Standards**

Submitted by Tina Pettingill, MPH, on behalf of the Maine Public Health Association

To Representative Kornfield, Senator Langley, and members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

My name is Tina Pettingill and I am the executive director of the Maine Public Health Association. 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 people. We are a science-based association that only weighs in on bills when we have the data or evidence to support our testimony.

We have a pediatric obesity epidemic in Maine. We’re closing in on ½ of our 5th graders as being classified as overweight or obese; with nearly 25% of our students as obese. This epidemic will cost our state 1.2 billion dollars over the next 20 years. And of course that is just the beginning of the costs—obesity causes additional costs to emotional well-being, family stress, and academic achievement.

Obesity is not the responsibility or fault of one person, place or thing. We did not get to this space and time in our culture alone and we are not going to get out from under this epidemic alone. It is going to take the effort and strength of our community health system, clinicians, school personnel, parents, and legislators. Obesity is a multi-faceted issue; there are evidence-based, systematic steps we are taking to turn this around but many more we can take to truly make a dent in this issue.

One of those is junk food marketing in schools. There is absolutely zero justification for using our children as captive pawns to hawk unhealthy products.

I would like to draw your attention to an example I’ve brought with me today of one type of marketing that is happening in our school. This is an example from just a few months ago in my home school district. Is this really the standard we set for our districts? Is this the best we can do?

I urge you to support LD 985 and break the cycle of allowing companies to free marketing to our children.

11 Parkwood Dr., Augusta, ME 04330 207-622-7566, ext. 230 mainepublichealth.org

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