

MaineHealth

MaineHealth Local Health Systems

Franklin Community
Health Network
LincolnHealth
MaineHealth Care At Home
Maine Behavioral Healthcare
Memorial Hospital
Maine Medical Center
Mid Coast-Parkview Health
NorDx
Pen Bay Medical Center
Southern Maine Health Care
Synernet
Waldo County General Hospital
Western Maine Health

Part of the MaineHealth Family

MaineHealth Accountable
Care Organization

MaineHealth Affiliates

MaineGeneral Health
New England Rehabilitation
Hospital of Portland
St. Mary's Health System

Testimony of Sarah Calder, MaineHealth In Support of LD 1868

“An Act To Restore Funding to the State's Tobacco Prevention and Control Program”

Thursday, February 3, 2022

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Sarah Calder, Director of Government Affairs at MaineHealth, and I am here today to testify in support of LD 1868, “An Act To Restore Funding to the State's Tobacco Prevention and Control Program.”

MaineHealth is an integrated non-profit health care system that provides a full continuum of health care services to the residents of eleven counties in Maine and one in New Hampshire. Every day, MaineHealth’s over 22,000 employees are committed to fulfilling our vision of “working together so our communities are the healthiest in America.”

MaineHealth has long supported strong tobacco prevention and treatment programs for our patients, employees and communities – we know that tobacco use is one of the most preventable health problem facing our state and nation. In 2001, we established the Maine Center for Tobacco Independence (CTI). In partnership with the Maine Centers for Disease Prevention and Control, MaineHealth implements the Maine QuitLink, training for health care providers and other professionals throughout the state, and technical assistance regarding tobacco-free policies.

Additionally, in 2016, MaineHealth partnered with the Maine CDC to implement and lead Domain 2: Tobacco Use and Exposure Prevention. As part of Maine Prevention Services, the MaineHealth Center for Tobacco Independence works with 16 community organizations to create tobacco and smoke-free environments across Maine, and help Maine youth and young adults be tobacco-free.

In October 2019, CTI received additional funds, as part of an additional \$5 million of the Fund for a Healthy Maine allocated by the 129th Legislature for expanded tobacco prevention and control efforts. This coincided with Maine experiencing a 12 percent increase over the prior two years (2017 to 2019) in use of electronic cigarettes products amongst high school students, with close to half reporting ever using an electronic vaping product. With the additional funding, CTI was able to respond to the alarming increased use of electronic tobacco products by high school students by implementing a youth quit vaping support service through the Truth Initiative (This is Quitting). This program has seen 216 young people enroll and the program acts as a call-to-action for the Maine CDC youth vaping prevention campaigns. Available school-related

resources that were made available include: assistance with communications, implementation and enforcement supports, alternatives to suspension being included in polices, and education and training opportunities focused on electronic cigarettes for students, staff and parents. The additional funds also allowed for local prevention partners to engage with tobacco retailers on best practices and resources to prevent sales to youth. Additionally, the funds allowed for a more robust presence at the community level with about 20 FTE added across the state. Within CTI, 2 additional staff were added to provide increased support for District Tobacco Prevention Partners, as well as increased coordination of statewide secondhand smoke efforts.

According to the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (US CDC), evidence-based, statewide tobacco control programs that are comprehensive, sustained, and accountable have been shown to reduce the number of people who smoke, as well as tobacco-related diseases and deaths. For every dollar spent on tobacco prevention, states can reduce tobacco-related health care expenditures and hospitalizations by up to \$55.

With that said, the US CDC recommends that the State of Maine invest \$15.9 million in tobacco control programming. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2021, the state tobacco control program was funded at \$13.9 million, which was reduced to \$13.8 million in the Governor's curtailment order. The \$5 million annual cut included in the biennial budget approved by the Legislature last Session will bring the State's total investment down to \$8.8 million (60% of the US CDC recommended level), despite the fact that Maine brought in over \$187 million in tobacco-related revenue in FY 2021 alone.

At a time when almost 17% of adults in Maine are smokers and 33% of Maine high school students reported use of an electronic vapor product in the past 30 days, we can ill afford to underfund this critical and lifesaving program. Instead, we urge the Legislature to fund the state tobacco prevention and treatment program at the US CDC recommended level of \$15.9 million per year.

Thank you for your consideration of this important request.