

MAINE PUBLIC  
HEALTH  
ASSOCIATION

20  
24

131ST  
LEGISLATURE  
POLICY  
REPORT



# Introduction

We are committed to advancing evidence-based policies that protect and promote public health for all people in Maine.

During the 131st legislature, MPHA influenced nearly 60 pieces of legislation, across a wide range of public health issues. We had notable wins for gun safety reform, Paid Family Leave, Wabanaki Nation rights, and the creation of the Blue Ribbon Commission to Design a Plan for Sustained Investment in Preventing Disease and Improving the Health of Maine Communities. We were also successful defending against several harmful provisions in cannabis policy.

I want to thank our members who reached out to their legislators; especially those that went above and beyond to help us move the needle on flavored tobacco restrictions, responsible cannabis policies, and recognizing Wabanaki Nations' inherent Sovereignty. You helped make good public health work happen and we are so grateful.

Overall, we are proud of our work, but know we can improve. If you would like to provide us with feedback or share other insights, we welcome hearing from you. Please do reach out.

Below, I have included our board-approved policy priorities, as well as the bills we engaged on during the 131st legislature.

Thank you for supporting our work.

In solidarity,  
Becca Boulos, MPH, PhD  
MPHA Executive Director



# Policy Priorities



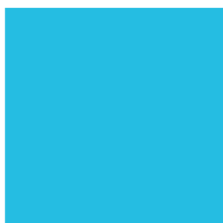
We had 6 policy priorities for the 131st legislature.

As a statewide public health organization, MPHA advocates for a wide-range of issues that impact people and places in Maine. Each session, we survey members, meet with partners, assess the political and cultural environment, and then identify a list of policy priorities. While we will advance or defeat legislation in other areas, these were our 6 priorities for the 131st legislature.



## PUBLIC HEALTH FUNDING

Ensure funds from the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement are used for tobacco prevention and control, and that public health programs and workforce are sustainably and consistently funded.



## BOLSTER LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH EFFORTS

Support local boards of health and local health officer training, as well as staffing at local public health units and funding for public health districts.



## WABANAKI SELF-DETERMINATION

Advance policies that recognize and reinforce Wabanaki Nations' inherent Sovereignty.



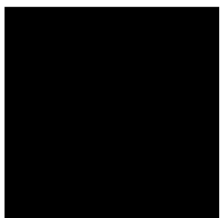
## ENDING THE SALE OF ALL FLAVORED TOBACCO PRODUCTS

End the sale and marketing of all flavored tobacco products in Maine to protect kids from a potentially life-long struggle with tobacco addiction.



## REDUCE UNSAFE USE OF CANNABIS AND ALCOHOL

Increase state funding for cannabis and alcohol use prevention and education, and advance efforts to reduce youth access and high-risk adult use.



## SUPPORT GUN SAFETY

Adopt policies to advance gun safety reform, including a 72-hour waiting period, background checks, a Red Flag law, and assault weapons ban.

# Measuring Progress

Progress made during the 131st Legislature

## Significant Wins

### Paid Leave

Passed paid leave state policy, which covers up to 12 weeks of leave for all workers & job protection after 120 days of employment.

### Public Health Funding

Established a Blue Ribbon Commission to identify strategies for improving sustainability and consistency in public health funding.

### Gun Safety

Passed policies to improve gun safety, including implementing a 72 hour waiting period, strengthening the Yellow Flag Law, conducting a study of voluntary removal, and expanding background checks.

### Mental Health

Advanced policies to increase investments in statewide infrastructure for community health services, and the funding of an Injury and Violence Prevention program at Maine CDC.

### Wabanaki Self-Determination

Restored Tribal Nation's court jurisdiction over non-Tribal Citizens who commit crimes on Tribal lands, and Penobscot Nation's jurisdiction over drinking water.

### Substance Use

Closed a tobacco tax equalization loophole so that all tobacco products will now be taxed at the same rate.

Organized a coalition to support responsible cannabis policy; defeated on-site consumption and amended high-risk adult and youth use bills.

# Measuring Progress

Progress made during the 131st Legislature

## Policy Challenges

### Wabanaki Self- Determin- ation

Unable to override the Governor's veto of legislation that would have granted Wabanaki Nation access to federal benefits.

### Cannabis & Alcohol

Unable to add more protections and prevent expanded access to cannabis and alcohol.

### Flavored Tobacco

Unable to advance a bill ending flavored tobacco sales in the House.

### Gun Safety

Unable to advance an assault weapons ban or Red Flag law.

# Measuring Progress

## Progress made during the 131st Legislature

Below, we share detailed results from priority bills during the 131st legislature. Below are priority issue bills we supported, unless noted otherwise.

Policy Priority	Bills	Summary	Outcome
<b>Public Health Funding</b>	<a href="#">LD 1722</a>	Public Health Funding Commission	Passed
	<a href="#">LD 258</a>	Budget	Passed
<b>Local Public Health</b>	<a href="#">LD 510</a>	Creates Associate Local Health Officers	Passed
<b>Wabanaki Self-Determination</b>	<a href="#">LD 2004</a>	Federal Benefits Access	Defeated
	<a href="#">LD 1970</a>	Indigenous Child Welfare Protections	Passed
	<a href="#">LD 78</a>	Print Treaty Obligations	Passed
	<a href="#">LD 2007</a>	Tribal Court & Water Jurisdiction	Passed
	<a href="#">LD 294</a>	Tribal Citizen on Baxter Park Authority	Died
<b>Flavored Tobacco (&amp; Other Tobacco Policies)</b>	<a href="#">LD 1215</a>	End Flavored Tobacco Sales & Marketing	Died
	<a href="#">LD 2028</a>	Tobacco Tax Equalization	Passed
	<a href="#">LD 1558</a>	Restricts Tobacco Sales in Pharmacies	Died
	<a href="#">LD 2157</a>	Restricts Tobacco Sales near Schools	Died
<b>Gun Safety</b>	<a href="#">LD 2086</a>	Assault Weapons Ban	Defeated
	<a href="#">LD 2119</a>	Voluntary Firearms Waiver	Died
	<a href="#">LD 2224</a>	Background checks	Passed
	<a href="#">LD 2238</a>	72-hour waiting period	Passed

# Measuring Progress

## Progress made during the 131st Legislature

Below, we share detailed results from priority bills during the 131st legislature. Below are priority issue bills we supported, unless noted otherwise.

Policy Priority	Bills	Summary	Outcome
<b>Cannabis &amp; Alcohol</b>	<a href="#">LD 88</a>	Funding for Opt-In Municipalities	Defeated
	<a href="#">LD 94</a>	Protections for Minors in Medical Cannabis	Defeated
	<a href="#">LD 202</a>	Off-Premises Cannabis Sales Provisions	Passed
	<a href="#">LD 365</a>	Improve Compliance with Cannabis Policies	Defeated

# Measuring Progress

## Other Public Health Legislation

Below, we share results from other public health bills that we supported (or opposed, as noted) during the 131st legislature.

Policy Issue	Bills	Summary	Outcome
<b>Environmental Health</b>	<a href="#">LD 71</a>	Petroleum Storage Tank Regulation	Passed
	<a href="#">LD 1006</a>	Well Water Testing	Died
<b>Education</b>	<a href="#">LD 1642</a>	Wabanaki Studies	Passed
	<a href="#">LD 2001</a>	African-American Studies	Died
<b>Healthcare</b>	<a href="#">LD 2237</a>	Community Mental Health	Passed
	<a href="#">LD 351</a>	OTC Birth Control	Passed
	<a href="#">LD 956</a>	Healthcare Data	Passed
	<a href="#">LD 1040</a>	MaineCare Coverage	Passed
	<a href="#">LD 199</a>	MaineCare Expansion	Defeated
	<a href="#">LD 780</a>	Reproductive Autonomy	Defeated

### MPHA defeated bills that would have rolled back our strong:

Voter Accessibility Laws (LDs [34](#) & [237](#))

Tobacco Control Laws (LDs [83](#), [620](#) & [662](#))

Cannabis Regulations (LDs [839](#) & [1952](#))

Environmental Laws (LDs [894](#) & [2116](#))

### MPHA worked to improve drug policies that would harm public health:

Cannabis (LDs [40](#) & [2147](#))

Synthetic Hemp (LD [1996](#))



# Next Steps

## Where do we go from here?

This session was characterized by some big wins, small gains, and some challenges. As we reflect on the session and the work ahead, we will be connecting with our partners and members about future priorities. We will remain steadfast allies in the effort to restore recognition of the Wabanaki Nations' inherent Sovereignty, leaders in protecting public health funding, and committed to protecting youth mental and physical health, especially in the face of a changing climate.

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### Sustaining Coalition Participation

We will maintain our participation in the Wabanaki Alliance, Flavors Hook Kids, Environmental Priorities, and Maine Gun Safety Coalitions. We also commit to expanding our new Cannabis Advocacy Coalition.

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### Candidate Education

We are preparing a toolkit to help MPHA members and partners have conversations about public health and prevention with candidates for elected office.

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### Engaging Members

We are always looking to hear from our members and partners. Our bi-annual advocacy survey will be distributed to MPHA members in summer 2024.

# State & National Representation

MPHA Staff and Board serve in leadership positions on multiple boards, working groups, and coalitions, representing our members and the public health perspective in governmental, non-governmental, and multi-sector groups at the national and state levels.

## **National**

Sarah Rines, MPHA Board Member - Immediate Past-Chair, American Public Health Association (APHA) Council of Affiliates

Becca Boulos, MPHA Executive Director - Chair Designate, APHA Action Board

## **State**

Matt Wellington, MPHA Associate Director - Member, Environmental Priorities Coalition Steering Committee

Becca Boulos - Co-Chair, Maine Climate Council's Community Resilience Working Group

Becca Boulos - Member, Maine Climate Council's Equity Subcommittee

Becca Boulos - Co-Chair, PFAS Fund Advisory Committee, Health Subcommittee

Becca Boulos - Member, PFAS Fund Advisory Committee

Becca Boulos - Member, Blue Ribbon Commission to Design a Plan for Sustained Investment in Preventing Disease and Improving the Health of Maine Communities

# Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the following foundations for supporting our advocacy and education efforts: Maine Health Access Foundation, The Bingham Program, Maine Cancer Foundation, Sewall Foundation, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, American Public Health Association, American Heart Association, and the Betterment Fund.

We also would like to thank the 60+ partners that MPHA works with statewide on public health policies, including members of the Wabanaki Alliance, Flavors Hook Kids Coalition, Environmental Priorities Coalition, Maine Paid Leave Coalition, Maine Gun Safety Coalition, and many others.

**We thank you for your  
continued support of  
our efforts to protect  
and promote public  
health in Maine.**

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## Contact

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