



THE BINGHAM PROGRAM

Testimony by the Bingham Program in Response to the Proposed Biennial Budget
for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2025 – June 30, 2027

**Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee
February 24, 2025**

Good morning, Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and distinguished members of the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs. My name is Morgan Hynd, and I am the Director of the Bingham Program, a charitable endowment held at Tufts' Medical Center, established in 1932 to promote health and advance medicine in Maine. Over our 93 year history, the Bingham Program has made significant contributions to the health and wellbeing of Maine people, with a particular focus on children for the last 20 years.

Philanthropy has long played a critical role in Maine, filling gaps where state capacity has been limited, supporting community-based programs, workforce development, and prevention initiatives to ensure that children and families have access to the care they need. While these investments have made a meaningful impact, they were never intended to replace essential public health infrastructure. That is why I am so encouraged to see Governor Mills include two Maine CDC oral health positions in the biennial budget—this is a critical first step toward rebuilding the infrastructure Maine needs to sustain progress in oral health.

I am also here as a Steering Committee member of the Children's Oral Health Network, a broad and longstanding Network of organizations that have been working together for years to strengthen Maine's oral health system. The Network—spanning health care providers, early childhood advocates, schools, and community leaders—has consistently advocated for the restoration of state leadership in oral health. The inclusion of these positions in the budget signals that Maine is ready to take this work seriously and invest in the future of oral health for its residents.

However, I want to express deep concern about threats to the Fund for a Healthy Maine (FHM), including potential impacts on the Maine CDC School Oral Health Program. For decades, the FHM has been a crucial source of funding for prevention programs, including oral health initiatives that reach children across the state. The proposed restructuring of the FHM—shifting critical prevention funding to the General Fund—puts these programs at risk of being lost or competing for limited taxpayer dollars. This change would weaken Maine's ability to sustain long-term investments in prevention, including oral health. I urge the legislature to keep the FHM intact and make it whole by adopting the recommended solution of dedicating a portion of

tobacco excise tax revenue to the Fund. Doing so will ensure that Maine remains committed to prevention and does not undermine the progress we have made in improving children's oral health.

I urge the legislature to maintain the two oral health positions in the final budget and to keep the Fund for a Healthy Maine intact. Investing in prevention and ensuring strong public health leadership is essential to keeping Maine children healthy and ready to thrive. Thank you for your time and consideration.