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January 7, 2026

Senator Ingwersen, Chair
Representative Meyer, Chair
Members, Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

Re: LD 1772 – *An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Commission to Design a Plan for Sustained Investment in Preventing Disease and Improving the Health of Maine Communities*

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide information in opposition to LD 1772, *An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Commission to Design a Plan for Sustained Investment in Preventing Disease and Improving the Health of Maine Communities*.

The Department opposes the original draft of the bill, which would have shifted fiscal authority away from the people's elected representatives and toward an unelected body. The Legislature is constitutionally empowered to oversee state revenues and expenditures—including those from the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement (MSA)—to pass a balanced budget each biennium. It is essential that this oversight remains in place to ensure transparent, responsive, and democratic use of public funds.

The flexibility to allocate these funds through the legislative process has allowed Maine to respond to changing public health needs, invest in evidence-based prevention programs, and adapt to urgent priorities such as youth smoking prevention, substance use prevention, and obesity prevention. Some of the Legislature's appropriations previously have leveraged additional matching federal dollars to maximize health services available to Maine people. Moving these funds into a Trust would limit the State's ability to address emerging public health issues swiftly.

We understand the sponsor is proposing an amendment which would establish the Maine Commission on Public Health Prevention for the purpose of advising the Legislature on matters related to public health and prevention, as well as "assisting" the Maine CDC with the development of a comprehensive State Health Plan. Under the Powers outlined, this Commission would also "advise, assist, and inform all executive branch departments, agencies, advisory boards, and the Governor on matters related to public health and prevention." Respectfully, this seems duplicative of the charge of the Maine CDC and the work that happens through the Statewide Coordinating Councils, including development of the State Health Improvement Plan

(SHIP). The SHIP was most recently updated in 2024 and is available publicly here: <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/about-us/commissions-review-panels/state-health-improvement-plan>. From this website:

State Health Improvement Plan

The [Maine 2024-2029 State Health Improvement Plan \(PDF\)](#) advances science and health equity and affirms the agency's commitment to one unified vision—a strong, safe, and healthy Maine. The plan leverages 4 key priorities:

- Maine has an inclusive and equitable culture of mental health, resiliency, and well-being for all
- Maine has housing that equitably meets the diverse needs of all
- Maine is a place where all people have equitable access to care that promotes health and well-being
- All people living in Maine thrive in a healing, supportive environment that equitably addresses substance use, from prevention to recovery, and its impacts on individuals, families, and communities

The Maine 2024–2029 SHIP was developed by members of the Maine SHIP Planning Team, comprised of health experts, stakeholders, and residents from throughout the state, and led by the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

The SHIP is a collaborative framework for ensuring all people in Maine have a fair and just opportunity to attain their highest level of health.

Further, the amendment establishes the Fund for a Healthy Maine Stabilization Fund as a sub-account for the Fund for a Healthy Maine. DHHS is still working with our internal subject matter experts to determine the impacts of this fund on any current programming. Any change to baseline funding for MaineCare could risk Maine’s ability to attain federal match, and as such requires thorough review. As originally written, the Department assessed the proposal to risk federal matching funds, and it is not clear if there is that same concern here. We appreciate your patience with our review and will plan to raise any concerns ahead of the work session.

For these reasons, the Department respectfully opposes LD 1772.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions during your deliberation of this bill.

Sincerely,



Sara Gagné-Holmes

Commissioner

Maine Department of Health and Human Services