



Cumberland County
Public Health

Testimony in support of LD 1772

Presented by Liz Blackwell-Moore, Director of Cumberland County Public Health

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Chair, and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee—thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Liz Blackwell-Moore and I am the Director of Cumberland County Public Health. I also had the honor of serving on the Blue Ribbon Commission and fully support of the recommendations of the commission. I am here today in strong support of LD 1772 which seeks to implement some of those recommendations.

LD 1772 represents exactly what Maine needs right now: a responsible, forward-looking, and evidence-based approach to strengthening our public health system and ensuring stable funding for prevention. As someone who has been working in public health for 25 years, I have seen firsthand the gaps, the opportunities, and the urgency behind our recommendations. This bill is not about creating something unnecessary or duplicative—it is about building the capacity and stability required for Maine to protect and improve the health of its people.

First, LD 1772 establishes the Maine Commission on Public Health and Prevention.

This new Commission is not another layer of bureaucracy; it is the connective tissue that has long been missing. Legislators routinely grapple with complex prevention and public health proposals, yet Maine does not currently have a sustained structure to provide independent, timely, interdisciplinary expertise.

The Commission fixes that. It gives the Legislature a trusted, nonpartisan source of analysis, data synthesis, policy recommendations, and community perspective. Having a wide range of folks, including many who are embedded in community work, will allow for the Legislature to have a deeper understanding of the public health needs and successes within the different regions of Maine and across topics. It also bridges the gap between what the science tells us and what is administratively or fiscally feasible.

Second, LD 1772 ensures the Maine CDC has the resources to develop and promote a comprehensive State Health Plan on a routine basis.

Healthcare is responsible for about 20% of a person's health. 80% of a person's health is shaped by other things including the community conditions in which people live; cultural norms; the ability to access basic resources; the health of the environment and the level of protection from climate change; as well as individual knowledge, behaviors, and experiences. Because health is impacted by so many things, the most effective State Health Plan will connect the dots among different efforts across many state departments, enhance data sharing, strengthen partnerships, and help the state be prepared for emerging threats. A robust plan will also help local organizations, like Cumberland County Public Health, align our efforts to ensure we are having the biggest impact possible.

Third, LD 1772 establishes the Fund for a Healthy Maine Stabilization Account.

This is simply good fiscal practice. For decades, the Fund for a Healthy Maine has lacked the



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stability it was designed to have. By setting aside a portion of disputed tobacco settlement payments into a Stabilization Account, this bill restores the original intent of the Fund: to invest consistently and predictably in prevention. People across the state talk a lot about prevention, but those of us doing the work of prevention know that our work doesn't fit within 2-year budget cycles, and so stability and predictability is critical for the success of the work.

In short, LD 1772 does three critical things:

- It strengthens public health leadership and expertise for policymakers.
- It provides the Maine CDC with tools for long-term planning.
- It stabilizes the Fund for a Healthy Maine so prevention programs can continue without interruption.

As a public health practitioner, and as someone who helped craft the Blue Ribbon Commission recommendations, I believe that LD 1772 is an incredibly important to the future of Maine. Prevention is not a luxury—it is the foundation of a healthier, stronger, more resilient Maine. And this bill builds that foundation with care, with evidence, and with fiscal responsibility.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to the health of Maine communities.