



Testimony in Support of Select Provisions of Part A of LD 2212

February 17, 2026

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and Honorable Members of the HHS and AFA Committees,

My name is Tess Parks, and I am the Policy Director of the Maine Recovery Action Project (ME-RAP), a grassroots network of Mainers working on community and policy based solutions to substance use. We are also the home of the Access Center, a recovery community center grounded in harm-reduction principles, located in the heart of downtown Augusta. At our Center, we combine traditional recovery supports, such as recovery meetings and recovery coaching, with harm-reduction practices, including operating a syringe service program (SSP).

On behalf of ME-RAP, I am writing to you in support of a particular provision in Part A of the 2026-2027 Recommended General Fund Supplemental Budget that seeks **funding for the establishment of one Health Program Manager within the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC)**. This position would oversee investigations, outbreaks, surveillance, and disease prevention for sexually transmitted infections and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

Maine is currently experiencing the largest HIV outbreak in our state's history. As of February 26, 2026, the Maine CDC has confirmed 36 cases of HIV in Penobscot County with 89% of cases having a Hepatitis C coinfection and 94% of cases reporting injection drug use (IDU) within 1 year of diagnosis¹. For context, over the past five years in Penobscot county there were an average of two new HIV diagnoses per year. Additionally, the Maine CDC reported in December of 2025 that five cases of HIV have been detected in Cumberland County.

The Maine CDC plays a critical role in preventing, investigating, and monitoring the transmission of infectious diseases throughout our state. As a state-certified SSP, the Maine CDC has provided our staff with training on providing rapid testing for infectious diseases and information on treatment options for our participants at the Access Center. Now more than ever, we need to invest in the Maine CDC's efforts to reduce the transmission of infectious diseases, which are extremely costly to treat and can be life threatening if left untreated.

We urge both the AFA and HHS Committees to support funding the Health Program Manager position within Maine CDC in the 2026-2027 Supplemental Budget.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Tess Parks
Policy Director
Maine Recovery Action Project (ME-RAP)

¹ <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/diseases-conditions/sexually-transmitted-diseases/hiv-aids>