

# MPHA

Maine Public Health Association

## Testimony of Maine Public Health Association Regarding:

### **LD 210: An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2025, June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027**

Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs  
Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development  
Room 228, State House  
Wednesday, February 5, 2025

Good afternoon, Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, and Housing and Economic Development. My name is Rebecca Boulos, and I am Executive Director of Maine Public Health Association. I grew up in Maine and currently reside in South Portland. I am here today to present testimony in support of funding for the Maine Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) in the Governor's proposed Biennial Budget.

MPHA is the state's oldest, largest, and most diverse association for public health professionals. We represent nearly 850 public health professionals and 70 organizations across Maine. Our mission is to advance the health of all people and places in Maine.

Maine AHEC is a statewide healthcare workforce development program aimed at addressing the healthcare workforce shortages in Maine, including the public health workforce. For almost 15 years, MPHA has partnered with Maine AHEC to provide high-quality training for Maine's public health workforce, including for staff at Maine CDC, Bangor, Portland and Cumberland County Public Health Departments, and the many non-governmental community partners and health professionals who support health initiatives across the state. We host their public health training website and associated public health programming, and work closely to supervise and support the professional development of students and early career professionals. AHEC-funded programs help ensure that public health professionals on the ground across Maine have the knowledge and skills to promote healthy, vibrant communities in our state. For a sense of scope, in 2024, Maine training partners delivered 62 trainings to 5,118 participants.

As Maine faces significant public health challenges including environmental hazards like the recent PFAS spill in Brunswick, climate change, emergency preparedness, and mental health, it is critically important to have a skilled and educated public health workforce. Beyond the public health workforce, Maine AHEC programs build our clinical healthcare workforce, particularly in rural areas, where the need is significant.

I would be happy to answer any questions. Thank you for your consideration.