

Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
February 9, 2022

Good morning, Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Heather Drake. I am a resident of Cape Elizabeth and Membership and Engagement Director of Maine Public Health Association. I am here in support of LD 1693: An Act To Advance Health Equity, Improve the Well-being of All Maine People and Create a Health Trust.”

LD 1693 has many components. It assures an annual investment in systems and infrastructure to improve health equity through the Trust for a Healthy Maine and adds new definitions to statute. It establishes baseline funding for public health districts’ health improvement plans and establishes an Office of Population Health Equity, including funding for the office’s director and data collection and reporting.

Here is more information about three of these provisions:

1. LD 1693 adds the following definitions to state statute: “community health worker,” “community resilience,” “social determinants of health,” “social group,” “structural inequity,” and “systemic racism.” Adding these definitions provides clarity about what is intended in the legislation, and advances efforts to improve health equity and address systems of inequity by naming them and creating context for investment. We believe these definitions align the legislation with the realities of what is needed to modernize and improve public health in Maine and reduce health disparities.
2. LD 1693 provides funding for Public Health Districts’ Public Health Improvement Plans (DPHIP): The DPHIPs identify each district’s public health priorities, and associated multi-year plan of objectives, strategies, and outcomes to address those priorities. The DPHIP also informs the state health plan and meets public health accreditation and national public health standards by using a community-based, multi-sector partnership model to improve public health. We believe establishing baseline funding in the budget is important for ongoing support for public health district efforts to address health priorities.
3. LD 1693 provides funding for the Office of Population Health Equity (OPHE): The OPHE is located in Maine CDC and responsible for promoting population health equity by addressing root causes of health disparities through data-informed interventions, community partnerships and community-led solutions. The work of this Office aligns well with the Health Equity funding cascade within the Trust for a Healthy Maine, in particular the focus on data and community partnerships.

I respectfully request you to vote LD 1693 “Ought to Pass.” Thank you for your consideration.