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Testimony of the Maine Osteopathic Association
Before the Committee on Health and Human Services

In Reference to:

LD 1523, An Act To Establish the Trust for a Healthy Maine
Public Hearing: Wednesday, February 9, 2022 10:00 AM

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Committee on Health and Human Services,

The Maine Osteopathic Association (MOA) is a professional organization representing approximately 400 osteopathic physicians as well as more than 600 residents and students. Our mission is to “serve the Osteopathic profession of the State of Maine through a coordinated effort of professional education, advocacy and member services in order to ensure the availability of quality osteopathic health care to the people of this State.”

The MOA has been a longtime supporter of the Fund for a Healthy Maine. This funding stream is not taxpayer or general fund money and it should be used for its original intended purpose—to help people quit smoking, to prevent disease, and to promote overall good health so that Mainers can be healthy and productive. With that being said, it is becoming increasingly clear that the Fund for a Healthy Maine (FHM) budget is no longer sustainable. Projections for FY24 and beyond show lower funding coming to Maine from tobacco settlements and other payouts which will make even the current FHM budget impossible to retain in the future.

We believe that establishing a Trust for a Healthy Maine to receive and protect money paid to the State pursuant to the tobacco settlement and from other sources will help ensure sustainability, flexibility, and provide long term public health investments that can have lasting impact.

LD1523 lays out a clear plan for management of Trust funding from 15-member board of trustees with expertise and experience in public health that will develop evidence-informed funding priorities based on an overall state health plan. It allows for stakeholder input and Advisory groups as needed, to ensure equity and accountability. We especially support the inclusion of the Health equity and health improvement account to use some funding on improving data collection regarding health disparities, expanding the public health workforce and supporting local health officer and community partnerships.

In order to be effective long term, public health and prevention focused efforts need the reassurance of continuous funding to make significant impact. When such efforts get scaled back or eliminated due in part to budget cuts and the diversion of critical funds to other budget line items – Mainers suffer. We believe LD1523 sets out a framework to support Maine in responding to the state’s most critical public health priorities.

It is for these reasons we urge the committee to vote “ought to pass”. Please do not hesitate to contact us at info@mainedo.org if you have any questions. Thank you.