

February 17, 2021

Dear Senator Baldacci, Representative Matlack, and Members of the State and Local Government Committee.

The American Heart Association (AHA) is the nation's oldest and largest voluntary organization dedicated to fighting heart disease and stroke, whose mission is to be a relentless force for a world of longer, healthier lives. We are writing in Opposition to Section 12 of LD 158 "*An Act To Eliminate Inactive Boards and Commissions*". This section proposes to eliminate the Tobacco Prevention and Control Advisory Council. It is my understanding that there will be an amendment for this section be eliminated from the bill to not eliminate currently active advisory councils, as an appointed member of the Tobacco Prevention and Control Advisory Council, we are supportive of that amendment.

The Tobacco Prevention and Control Advisory Council was created in 1997 as part of the originating statute that created the state's tobacco prevention and control program, housed within the Maine CDC. The advisory council was created to provide advice to the Maine CDC in carrying out its statutory duties with regard to the tobacco control program and ensure coordination of the program with relevant nonprofit and community agencies and the Department of Education, the Department of Health and Human Services and other relevant state agencies. The advisory council consists of 9 members, appointed by the Governor and members of legislative leadership and members serve for 3-year terms and may be reappointed. The Maine CDC provides staff assistance to the advisory council and the council is required to report annually on the program to the Governor and the Legislature and include any recommendations or proposed legislation to further the purposes of the program. The advisory council currently consists of a diverse set of individuals that bring a significant number of years of experience and expertise in tobacco prevention and treatment, and public health, more generally.

Tobacco use remains the leading preventable risk factor for cardiovascular disease, cancer, and lung disease, which account for most of the top 5 leading causes of death of Maine people. Nationally, Maine has the 6th highest rate of smoking-related cancer cases and the 11th highest rate of smoking-related cancer deaths.¹ Smoking costs Maine \$811 million in health care costs each year including approximately \$262 million in state Medicaid costs.² As such, the state tobacco control program plays a vital role in reducing the toll of tobacco – both in terms of lives, livelihood and costs – in Maine. The advisory council helps ensure the program is carrying out its legal requirements effectively and provides information and reports annually to the Governor and HHS Committee. This reporting provides insights that ensure accountability of the program and identify concerning trends that may be addressed through legislation. For these reasons, we urge you to support the proposed amendment to eliminate section 12 of LD 158 and we appreciate the opportunity to submit our comments.

Sincerely
Allyson Perron Drag
American Heart Association/ Stroke Association
Government Relations Director

References

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division of Population Health. BRFSS Prevalence & Trends Data [online]. 2019. [accessed Feb 09, 2021]. URL: <https://www.cdc.gov/brfss/brfssprevalence/>.

² Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids (CTFK), *The Toll of Tobacco in Maine*. Updated October 20, 2020. <https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/problem/toll-us/maine>.

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American Heart Association

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