

MPHA

Maine Public Health Association

ANNUAL REPORT



2023

Mission

Our mission: Improve and sustain the health and well-being of all people in Maine through health promotion, disease prevention, and the advancement of health equity.

Who We Are

Maine Public Health Association has been The Voice of Public Health in Maine since 1984. We are the state's oldest, largest, and most diverse association for public health professionals. We represent more than 700 individual members and 60 organizations across the state.

Our guiding principles:

- Be the leading voice for public health policy and advocacy in Maine.
- Convene broad-based stakeholders and promote evidence-based and data-driven policy.
- Promote healthy communities and health equity.
- Engage members in our work.

MPHA has longstanding partnerships with several public health organizations across the state and is an affiliated association of the American Public Health Association (APHA). APHA is the national voice of public health and champions the health of all people and all communities. They are the only organization that combines a 150-year perspective, the ability to influence federal policy to improve the public's health and a member community from all public health disciplines and over 40 countries. Learn more at www.apha.org.

A Message from MPHA's Executive Director & Board President

Dear MPHA Members, Supporters & Friends:

Has our work helped make Maine a healthier and safer place to live? That's the question we consider at the end of every year. Thanks in part to MPHA's advocacy, policies passed this year will give families the resources they need to thrive through a paid leave program, reduce youth tobacco use, and lay the groundwork for a bipartisan plan to more sustainably fund public health in Maine.

Our state is growing, and the public health challenges we face, whether its mental health, climate resilience, or substance use, are complex. To meet these health challenges head on, the Association grew its membership, expanded its network of partners, and launched new initiatives to communicate the value of public health to stakeholders and the public. We also pivoted to respond to the tragic shootings in Lewiston, and helped our partners build a strong statewide campaign to call for meaningful gun safety legislation.

We also welcomed a new addition to the team, Associate Director, Matt Wellington. Prior to joining MPHA, Matt spent ten years working nationally to pass policies and change corporate practices to protect peoples' health and well-being.

Looking forward, we plan to tackle critical health challenges and grow the Association even further by:

- Passing legislation to prevent future gun violence in our communities
- Ending the sale of flavored tobacco products statewide
- Supporting efforts to sustainably fund Maine's public health programs
- Serving as an ally in the recognition of Wabanaki self-determination
- Advocating for policies to reduce unsafe cannabis use

Thank you for your continued support and partnership.



Rebecca Boulos, MPH, PhD
Executive Director
Maine Public Health Association



Jay Knowlton, MPH
Board President
Maine Public Health Association

Advocating for Health

This year, we helped advance policies that will protect the health and well-being of all people in Maine. Check out the highlights below and our [first session policy report](#) here.

Passing paid family and medical leave

As part of the Maine Paid Leave Coalition, we helped pass landmark legislation that gives families the support they need to thrive at a pivotal moment in their lives.

Protecting public health funding

We advocated to establish a Blue Ribbon Commission that came out with clear, bipartisan recommendations for how to sustainably fund public health programs in Maine.

Ending the sale of flavored tobacco products

We offered our research expertise to advance LD 1215, an Act to End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products, through the Maine Senate. We also worked to pass three more local ordinances in Rockland, Bar Harbor, and Falmouth, increasing the total to 7 communities taking action to protect kids' health.



"MPHA's involvement with the Blue Ribbon Commission to Design a Plan for Sustained Investment in Preventing Disease and Improving the Health of Maine Communities was invaluable. MPHA's participation on this Commission helped to elevate a thoughtful and deliberate discussion about sustainable investments in Maine's public health system. The bipartisan effort, bolstered by wide expertise in public health activities and funding, has laid the groundwork for critical investments in Maine's public health workforce and prevention programs."

-Senator Peggy Rotundo, Senate Chair of the Commission

Providing Expertise and Raising Visibility



“Maine advocates want federal emissions standards extended for new cars”--Spectrum News 1/25/23

“In Maine, we are in the unfortunate position of importing most of our air pollution from other states due to wind direction and geography. This pollution hurts our air quality, which can increase the incidents and prevalence of respiratory illnesses, including asthma. These health risks cannot be emphasized enough.”-MPHA Executive Director Rebecca Boulos

In 2023, our staff and members raised visibility in the media, sharing their perspectives and expertise about tobacco use in Maine, public health funding, tribal sovereignty and more.

Check out some of the highlights:

“Flavored tobacco ban gets tabled, faces uncertain prospects”--Portland Press Herald 7/26/23

“If we had to tackle any health issue, this is the one to prioritize. Flavors are a major driver of youth initiation to tobacco use.”-MPHA Associate Director Matt Wellington

“Wabanaki Alliance official talks Native American Heritage month”--WABI 11/29/23

“Public health is about making sure everybody has the opportunity to live happy and healthy lives, and recognizing sovereignty will help them reach their full potential, which is their right,” -MPHA Associate Director Matt Wellington.

Serving As An Expert Voice

In addition to engaging directly through legislative advocacy, we also serve on several statewide and local committees including:

- Maine Climate Council’s Community Resilience Planning Working Group (co-lead)
- Maine Climate Council’s Equity Subcommittee
- PFAS Fund Advisory Committee (Health Subcommittee co-lead)
- Blue Ribbon Commission to Design a Plan for Sustained Investment in Preventing Disease and Improving the Health of Maine Communities
- State Health Improvement Plan Advisory Committee
- Cumberland County’s Community Health Improvement Plan Advisory Committee

Coalitions and Partnership

One of MPHA's biggest strengths is our diverse network of partners that we work with to achieve significant gains for Maine's overall health and well-being. Here are some highlights from our coalition work this past year:

Reducing youth tobacco use

The Flavors Hook Kids Maine coalition's mission is to end the sale of flavored tobacco products that attract and hook kids into a potentially life-long struggle with tobacco addiction. MPHA serves as an expert spokesperson in the coalition, sharing research and other information with lawmakers and partners about the toll of tobacco use in Maine and the evidence-based policy solutions to address it.



"We need steadfast allies in our fight to recognize Wabanaki sovereignty, and I'm thankful for MPHA's dedication to that effort."

*-Ambassador Maulian Bryant,
Board President, Wabanaki Alliance*

Promoting environmental health

We were proud to be appointed to the steering committee of the Environmental Priorities Coalition last year. The EPC is a cross-sector coalition of nearly 40 organizations that align efforts each legislative session to pass policies that will conserve the environment, combat climate change, and improve environmental health.

Advocating for a safer cannabis industry

In 2023, we convened a new coalition of healthcare, public health, and civic minded groups to advocate for a safer cannabis industry. We're working to fend off efforts that would weaken current public safety and consumer protections, and look forward to strengthening oversight in the future.

Recognizing Wabanaki sovereignty

The Wabanaki Alliance is a coalition of more than 200 organizations, businesses, and other stakeholders in support of recognizing Wabanaki sovereignty. This year we worked alongside the Wabanaki Alliance to lift up their message in the media, as well as in the halls of Augusta.

Meeting the Moment: The Lewiston Shootings

On October 25th, a gunman armed with an assault style weapon killed 18 people at two popular community spots in Lewiston before eventually taking his own life. The search for the shooter lasted days. For those who lost friends and loved ones in the shootings, the grief and trauma are unimaginable. The impact of the tragedy rippled throughout the state, affecting everyone in Maine.



After the shootings, MPHA organized an expert webinar to discuss evidence-based policy solutions to reduce gun violence and spoke at a rally in Augusta (pictured above). In the weeks that followed, we worked alongside the Maine Gun Safety Coalition to build a robust campaign to push for meaningful gun safety legislation during the 2024 legislative session.



"MPHA played a pivotal role in helping the Maine Gun Safety Coalition stand up a robust campaign to turn grief from the Lewiston shootings into legislative action that will protect our communities from gun violence."

-Camilla Shannon, President of the Board, Maine Gun Safety Coalition

National Recognition

MPHA engages in public health work at the national level as an affiliate of the American Public Health Association. We received recognition for our work at APHA's 2023 annual meeting -- Executive Director, Rebecca Boulos, received the Affiliate Staff of the Year Award and was appointed chair-designate of the APHA Action Board.

We also showcased our expertise at the conference--Associate Director, Matt Wellington, presented on a panel about how to find and cultivate the right messengers on public health campaigns and Becca presented our work to end flavored tobacco sales at the poster session.

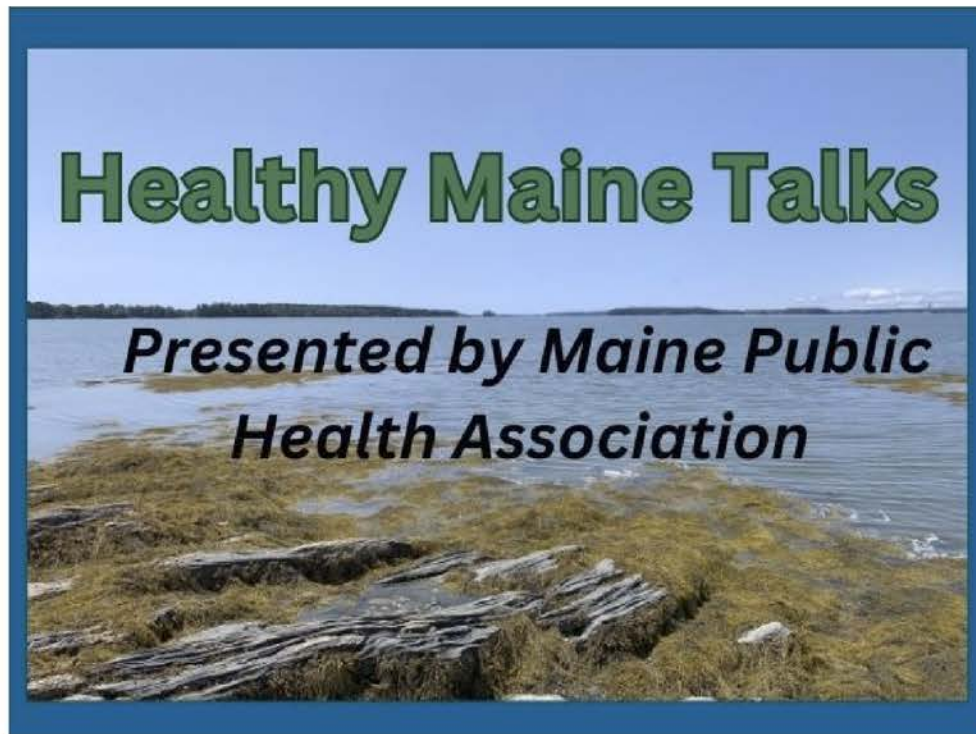


Above: Rebecca Boulos receives APHA Affiliate Staff of the Year Award.



Above: Matt Wellington presents at APHA. Left: MPHA Members meet for a walk around Atlanta at the APHA conference.

Our New Podcast



In 2023, MPHA launched Healthy Maine Talks, a monthly podcast highlighting people in Maine who are working to make their communities safer and healthier. You can find it on all major streaming platforms! Thank you to the New England Public Health Training Center for their generous support of Healthy Maine Talks.

Here's just a sampling of some of our conversations with advocates, reporters, and researchers working to address critical health issues in Maine in 2023.

“With cancer, we all relate to it...we all have this unfortunate connection to this disease. Cancer has had a significant impact on Mainers all across the state.”--**Ray Ruby, Executive Director of Maine Cancer Foundation**

“It is my belief based on the research I've done that in America and in Maine the reason for zoning restrictions at its root is because of race and racism.”--**Deb Ibonwa, Esq., Maine Equal Justice**

“Dental disease is the most common chronic disease among children and it can have whole body effects.”--**Kalie Hess, MPH, Children's Oral Health Network of Maine**

“The resilience and coming together of the people of Lewiston and the State of Maine is something to behold in these really tragic times.”--**Joe Lawlor, Portland Press Herald**

Training and Workforce Development



Left : One installment of a 4 part series covering cannabis, public health, and policy in Maine.

In 2023, MPHA continued its monthly webinar series, covering issues like environmental waste solutions, Maine’s Climate Corps, analyzing data on children’s health in Maine, and more. The series, supported by the New England Public Health Training Center, provides public health workers in Maine and across the U.S. (even internationally!) with critical knowledge on public health issues that they can use in their own communities.

We hosted a day-long conference about Equity and Ethics in Public Health Research and Evaluation, and held a 4-part webinar series about cannabis policy and public health impacts in Maine.

We also launched a new skills training series on advocacy and communications for public health professionals, which covered how to give effective TV/radio interviews, write opinion editorials and letters to the editor, and provided tips on advocating for health policies.

Health professionals in the media

- Trusted voice
- Provide facts
- Know your audience
- Keep it simple



Right: Matt conducts a media training for public health professionals.

2023 Annual Meeting Public Health and the Economy: Working Across Sectors



MPHA's annual conference is the largest public health gathering in Maine. Last year's conference brought together hundreds of stakeholders to brainstorm, learn, and engage in solutions to promote health and well-being. Dr. Brian Castrucci (pictured left) from the de Beaumont Foundation embodied the conference theme, "Public Health and the Economy: Working Across Sectors," in his keynote address. He emphasized the importance of defining and messaging public health in a way that resonates with people.

Below Left : Brett Lewey, Passamaquoddy Citizen, welcomes the conference attendees with a song.



We featured dozens of breakout sessions, a plenary panel about the intersections between economic prosperity and health, and Dr. Puthiery Va (pictured below), new director of the Maine Center for Disease Control & Prevention, closed out the conference with her priorities for public health in Maine.

Below: Yellow Light Breen (Maine Development Foundation) introduces the plenary panel, featuring Anne Ball as moderator (Maine Development Foundation), and panelists: Muhidin Libah (Liberation Farms and the Somali Bantu Community Association), Azenaide Pedro (CEI Maine), Monique Coombs (Maine Coast Fishermen's Association), and Peter Horch (Horch Roofing)



Engaging Our Membership

MPHA's membership is the foundation of our work. Our members participate in programming, add new ideas, advocate for public health issues, and educate colleagues, students, policymakers, and the public about their work. In 2023, we grew to over 700 individual and more than 60 organizational members. ***Our membership has more than doubled over the last five years!***



MPHA events are a great way to network with other members of the public health community, establish connections, and celebrate our work. In 2023, we held annual staples like our conference and awards ceremony, and added new events like a member outing at the Portland Sea Dogs opening game (pictured left) and a public health careers and networking event at Bowdoin College.

We also developed creative and meaningful ways to engage our members, including through our 5 member sections and a new Healthcare Systems and Climate Learning Collaborative. We continued our mentor program, and public health policy ambassador program, which engages members interested in taking part in our advocacy efforts as expert spokespeople and policy researchers in their interest areas.

"Joining MPHA has allowed me to network with like-minded professionals, build community around public health, and advance health equity."

-Albert G. Abena, D.D.S., J.D, Assistant Dean for Community Partnerships at the University of New England College of Dental Medicine





With Gratitude to Our Supporters

Thank You to the following organizations for their generous support of MPHA in 2023, including support of our 39th Annual Meeting.

Green indicates organizational membership.

2023 GRANT FUNDING

Harold Alfond Center for the Advancement of Maine's Workforce
American Public Health Association
The Betterment Fund
The Bingham Program
Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids
Maine Cancer Foundation
Maine Health Access Foundation
Maine Public Health Training Center/Maine AHEC
New England Public Health Training Center
Howard and Geraldine Polinger Family Foundation
Elmina B. Sewall Foundation

GOLD SUPPORTER (\$10,000)

MaineHealth
Northern Light Health

BRONZE SUPPORTERS (\$3,000)

AdCare Educational Institute of
Maine
HealthReach Community Health
Centers
MaineHealth Let's Go!
MaineGeneral Health
MCD Global Health
Portland Public Health
University of Southern Maine
Bangor Public Health and
Community Services
Community Health Options



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FRIEND SUPPORTERS (<\$3,000)

American Cancer Society-Cancer Action Network	Healthy Acadia
American Heart Association, ME	Healthy Androscoggin
American Lung Association, ME	Healthy Communities of the Capital Area
AstraZeneca	HealthReach
Auburn, ME	Help Me Grow
Bangor Savings Bank	The Jackson Laboratory
Be SMART for Gun Safety	LymeTV
Bicycle Coalition of Maine	Maine Affordable Housing Coalition
Blaisdell Consulting	Maine Allcare
Boston University School of Public Health	Maine Conservation Voters
Cary Medical Center	Maine Council on Aging
Catholic Charities Office of Maine Refugee Services	Maine Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics
Children's Oral Health Network	Maine Development Foundation
City of Portland, Portland Public Health Division	Maine Environmental Education Association
Coastal Healthy Communities Coalition	Maine Family Planning
The Community Caring Collaborative	Maine Hospital Association
Cross Cultural Community Services	Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition
Cumberland County, Maine	Maine Immunization Coalition
Defend Our Health	Maine Indoor Air Quality Council
Disability Rights Maine	Maine Medical Association
Downeast Health Research Collaborative	Maine Network of Healthy Communities
Ethos Marketing & Design	Maine Osteopathic Association
Full Plates Full Potential	Maine Resilience Building Network
Good Shepherd Food Bank	Maine State Breastfeeding Coalition
Groups Recover Together	MaineTransNet
GrowSmart Maine	Market Decisions Research
GSK Vaccines	MMC Preventive Medicine Enhancement for Maine Program



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FRIEND SUPPORTERS (<\$3,000) CONT.

Network of the National Library of Medicine
New Mainers Public Health Initiative
Northeast Delta Dental
Oasis Free Clinics
The Opportunity Alliance
Partnerships for Health
Penobscot Community Health Care
PSR Maine
Public Consulting Group
Resurgam Group
The Roux Institute
Rinck Advertising
University of New England Center for
Excellence in Public Health
University of New England Westbrook College
of Health Professions
Volunteers of America, Northern New England
Wabanaki Public Health & Wellness
Western Maine Community Action
Wild Oats Bakery
WinterKids

With Gratitude to Our Supporters

Thank You to the following individuals for their generous support of MPHA in 2023, including making an additional donation when they renewed their membership, supporting our annual awards ceremony, providing scholarships for student memberships, or donating as part of our annual appeal.

2023 MPHA INDIVIDUAL SUPPORTERS

Allen Browne	Tom Judge
Ned Claxton	Emily T. Keller, MD, MPH
Barbara Covey	Douglas Klaucke
Deb Deatrack	Jay McCreight
Ruth Dufresne	Barbara Poirier
Judy Feinstein	Roger Wilson
Michelle Fong	Anonymous (13)
Sarah & Jeremy Gabrielson	

WE ARE ALSO GRATEFUL TO MEMBERS OF MPHA'S BOARD FOR THEIR GENEROUS SUPPORT IN 2023

Executive Committee

Jay Knowlton, MPH
(President)
Leo Waterston, MA (Vice-
President)
Maye Emlein, JD, MPH
(Treasurer)
Bill Flagg (Secretary)
Noah Nesin, MD (Past-
President)

At-Large Members

Clay Graybeal, PhD, MSW
Jennifer Gunderman, MPH
Rachael Mahar, RN, BSN

At-Large Members cont.

Sana Osman
Denise Tepler, MA
Judy Tupper, DHEd, CHES, CPPS
Doug Michael, MPH
Ed Miller, MS

Affiliate Representative to the Governing Council (ARGC) of APHA

Sarah Rines

Non-Voting Members

Stephen Sears, MD, MPH (Clinical
Advisor)
Nancy Birkhimer, MPH (Maine CDC
Liaison)