



Maine Public Health Association

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# ANNUAL REPORT



# A Message from MPHA's Executive Director

The COVID-19 pandemic quickly changed our lives. Around the world, everyone had to completely alter how they interact with others, including family, friends, and colleagues. The pandemic impacted our work, our relationships, and our health. All of us experienced loss, whether due to the death of a loved one, unemployment, or changes to our routines that are meaningful to us.

Against this backdrop, we saw protests across the country demanding racial justice. Racism is a public health crisis, and we all have a role in advancing equity.

Our chosen field of public health is not an easy one; it's our compassion for others that drives our work. Thank you for your heroic efforts protecting others during the pandemic, and for caring for those who became sick. Every time you stayed home, wore your mask, or ordered take out you were saving lives and helping others – thank you. Please know you are appreciated.

At MPHA, we also had to quickly pivot. All our programming moved online. We organized an epidemiology and infectious disease webinar series so that our colleagues could learn about this field. We prepared materials for municipalities to support their Keep Maine Healthy applications and implementation, and convened community coronavirus task forces. We organized trainings for community health workers and held our annual conference virtually, attracting just under 400 public health students and professionals across Maine and New England. Our advocacy efforts didn't stop: we lobbied to have gun shops removed from the "essential businesses" list and with our partners, laid the groundwork for a multi-pronged tobacco prevention campaign.

The COVID-19 pandemic laid bare health disparities among people in Maine, and around the country and globe. People across the state are developing a better understanding of public health, and about how Maine's public health system, both governmental and non-governmental partners, works. There is significant momentum of engagement among our members, and Mainers more broadly, to invest in public health and in efforts to dismantle systems that perpetuate health disparities, particularly those that underlie racial health disparities.

We continue to work across sectors to improve social, environmental, and political determinants of health, advancing efforts in areas such as housing, safe drinking water, chronic disease prevention, vaccination, and climate change resilience and adaptation. We received the American Public Health Association's inaugural Climate Leadership Award and have continued to share about our experience at the state and national levels, including being invited to: serve on a Clean Air Act panel with Maine Senator, Angus King, present at APHA's annual meeting, and present about the intersection of advocacy and behavior change theory in the context of climate change at the Society for Prevention Research's international conference, "Prevention Science and Climate Action: Charting a course of involvement."

As we look ahead to 2021 and beyond, our priorities are to extend our partnerships in advocacy and training and increase our member engagement through our sections, committees, and mentor program. Thank you for your ongoing support of public health in Maine.

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



# Highlights from our Advocacy Efforts

2020 was a busy and productive year as we submitted testimony, served on committees and coalitions, and educated our members about a diversity of policy topics.

- 2020:
  - Submitted testimony for 16 bills during the 129th legislature. Issues included chronic disease and cancer prevention to safe drinking water, climate change and environmental health, broadband expansion, healthcare access, and vaccines.
  - Held a series of legislative briefings for MPHA members about the Maine Climate Council, Trust for a Healthy Maine, and the Vaccine Referendum.
  - Co-wrote the Maine Democratic Party's Public Health platform with Senator Rebecca Millett.
- On-going Efforts:
  - Serving as the organizational lead on a bill that would protect Maine's Master Settlement Agreement funds for tobacco prevention and public health (Trust for a Healthy Maine).
  - Co-leading the public health sub-group of the Maine Climate Council's Community Resilience Planning, Public Health and Emergency Management Working Group.
  - Serving on Maine Climate Council's Equity Subcommittee.

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Maine Democratic Party's Public Health platform:


"We believe that protecting public health and safety are essential functions of a representative government. We support investments and partnerships in Maine's public health and safety systems, structures and workforce that prevent illness and injury, promote good health, and give all Maine children and adults the opportunity to lead healthful, productive lives."

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# Developing a Stronger Public Health Workforce

A knowledgeable and skilled public health workforce is vital to ensuring a well-run public health system. We such, at MPHA, we work with partners to develop and deliver public health professional development and learning opportunities. In 2020, we:

- Held a Public Health, Epidemiology, and Infectious Disease webinar series, with support from the New England Public Health Training Center, over the course of 10 weeks, averaging 60 people per webinar for the first two in the series and increasing to an average of 100 attendees for each webinar.
- Held 11 weekly COVID-19 Coffee Conversations for MPHA members featuring various guest speakers from across Maine to discuss COVID-19's impact on the populations they serve and their programming.
- Held 3 webinars in partnership with New England Public Health Training Center:
  - National Network of Library of Medicine
  - Building Community Through Outdoor Activities (Teens to Trails)
  - An Anti-Racist Imperative for Public Health Data
- Co-organized a Health Equity Dialogue speaker series with University of Maine, Augusta on health equity, public health data, transgender health and oral health with 570 attendees across all the events.
- Held a 4-week virtual conference with 50+ sessions, and our awards ceremony; 369 public health professionals across Maine and New England registered.



Our partners in developing a public health professional development & learning opportunities include:

- Maine AHEC
- New England Public Health Training Center
- Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention
- Maine university systems

# Growing Our Membership & Strengthening Our Partnerships

MPHA's membership is the foundation of our work. Our members support us by participating in programming, adding new ideas, advocating for public health issues, and educating colleagues, students, policymakers and the public about their work.

In 2020, we:

- Launched 5 Issue-Based Member Sections.
- Enhanced individual and organizational member benefits.
- Grew membership by 174 people.
- Added 11 new organizational members.

Likewise, the partners we work with enable us to have a stronger voice at the State House and a bigger impact on initiatives through collaboration and coordination. Our partnerships also enable us to demonstrate how far-reaching public health is, touching and impacting many facets of our daily lives.

- Convened COVID community task forces to connect with each other and facilitated trainings with state leaders.
- Coordinated advocacy efforts with other Maine Health Access Equity grantees.
- Partnered with U.S. PIRG and Maine Community Action Partnership to develop COVID-19 campaigns on mask wearing and vaccination uptake.
- Member of the Flavors Hook Kids campaign to end the sale of flavored tobacco products in Maine.
- Member of the Environmental Priorities Coalition, which includes more than 30 environmental and public health organizations across Maine that come together to form one policy agenda.



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**Issue Based Member Sections:**

**Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs**

**Climate Change**

**Obesity**

**Public Health Infrastructure**

**Public Health in Underserved Populations**

# With Gratitude to our Supporters

## 2020 Grant Funding

- American Public Health Association
- The Betterment Fund
- The Bingham Program
- Polinger Family Foundation
- Maine Cancer Foundation
- Maine Health Access Foundation
- Maine Lung Cancer Coalition
- Maine Public Health Training Center/Maine AHEC
- New England Public Health Training Center

## Silver Supporter (\$5,000)

- MaineHealth
- Northern Light Health

## Bronze Supporters (\$3,000)

- Let's Go!
- University of Southern Maine

**Special thanks to these organizations for their generous support of MPHA in 2020, including support of our 36th Annual Meeting.**

## Friend Supporters (<\$3,000)

- American Heart Association
- American Lung Association, ME
- Bicycle Coalition of Maine
- Cary Medical Center
- Disability Rights Maine
- Environmental Health Strategy Center
- Good Shepherd Food Bank
- Healthy Acadia
- Healthy Communities of the Capital Area
- Healthy Oxford Hills
- Husson University
- Laura Blaisdell Consulting, LLC
- MaineGeneral Medical Center
- Maine Conservation Voters
- MaineHealth Preventive Medicine Fellows
- Maine Medical Association
- Maine Medical Center CORE
- Maine Resilience Building Network
- Medical Care Development
- Midcoast Hospital
- Northeast Delta Dental
- Partnership for Children's Oral Health
- Penobscot Community Health Care
- Public Health Partners, LCC
- Rinck Advertising, LLC
- Saving Smiles
- Siruno Stroke Prevention Program
- Southern Maine Conservation Collaborative
- University of New England
- Volunteers of Northern New England
- WinterKids

# MPHA Mission



The Maine Public Health Association has served as 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 500 individual members and 30 organizations across the state. The mission of MPHA is to improve and sustain the health and well-being of all people in Maine through health promotion, disease prevention, and the advancement of health equity. As a statewide nonprofit association, we advocate, act, and advise on critical public health challenges, aiming to improve the policies, systems, and environments that underlie health inequities – but which also have potential to improve health outcomes for all people in Maine. We are not tied to a national agenda, which means we are responsive to the needs of Maine's communities, and we take that responsibility seriously.

MPHA's guiding principles are to:

- 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 140-plus 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](http://www.apha.org).