

Protecting Air Quality for All People
Statement by Maine Public Health Association
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Breathing clean air is a basic right of all people. In the U.S., federal regulation of air quality is a necessary tool for protecting the air we breathe, particularly for a state like Maine since much of our air pollution originates in other states.

Air pollution, including ozone and particulate matter, increases risk for asthma and other respiratory illnesses (including more severe cases of COVID-19) and can aggravate symptoms for those who already have respiratory health challenges. According to the American Lung Association's [2022 State of the Air Report](#), thousands of Mainers live in parts of the state where air quality is poor enough to cause and exacerbate both acute and chronic health problems. The Report also showed that 19,797 Maine children and 116,217 adults have asthma and that poor air quality impacts those with underlying health conditions, such as lung cancer. Like many public health challenges, we see disparities in these burdens with a greater prevalence of adverse impact among rural, low-income and minority populations.

Greenhouse gas emissions are a primary cause of climate change, which is recognized as a public health emergency that acts as a threat multiplier, exacerbating existing health inequities, including poverty, environmental degradation, and political instability.¹

Action Steps – MPHA commits to supporting efforts to:

- Implement stricter emissions standards across states to reduce the impact of poor air quality caused by other states' pollution.
- Implement air allergen, particulate matter, and ozone monitoring in all Maine counties, and update rules guiding air quality control regions and air quality control standards.
- Collect, analyze, and report data related to air quality in Maine, including disaggregating data by age, race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sex, disability, geography, and other demographic factors – allowing for the identification of socially vulnerable populations, and accordingly, the strategic deployment of interventions.
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Maine, including through the transportation and health care sectors.

¹ Rudolph L, Harrison C, Buckley L & North S. 2018. *Climate Change, Health, and Equity: A Guide for Local Health Departments*. Oakland, CA and Washington D.C., Public Health Institute and American Public Health Association.