

Testimony in Support of LD 463 – An Act To Reduce Obesity Rates in Maine
Submitted by Lori A. Kaley, MS, RDN, LD, MSB

Good afternoon, Senator Gratwick, Representative Hymanson and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services,

My name is Lori Kaley and I am a resident of Mount Vernon, Maine. In my work as a Registered, Licensed Dietitian I provide food and nutrition consultation to organizations. I am speaking on behalf of the Maine Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics where I serve as State Regulatory Specialist. The Maine Academy is an affiliate of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, an association with over 100,000 dietetic practitioner-members. We are the food and nutrition professionals who can translate the science of nutrition into practical solutions for healthy living for individuals and populations. We strive to improve the health of Maine’s citizens through quality food and nutrition information and services. Our members work across the state in hospitals, schools, public health clinics, nursing homes, food service management, universities, research, and private practice. Our services lend themselves to telehealth, as well.

I am here today to testify in support of LD 463, An Act To Reduce Obesity Rates in Maine, with recommendations. Unfortunately, the obesity epidemic in Maine has continued unabated with the current prevalence of obesity and overweight in adults at 65%, in high school students at 30%, and in 2-4-year-old children in WIC at 31%.ⁱ The total annual cost to Maine due to overweight and obesity is 2.56 billion dollars.ⁱⁱ Maine last had a comprehensive state plan to address obesity, the Maine Physical Activity and Nutrition Plan, in 2005-2010. Also, the State Health Improvement Plan 2018-2020 does include Healthy Weight as a state-level public health priority with objectives for state-wide action. Evidence-based programs, policies and practices to reverse the obesity trend exist but to be effective require a commitment to consistent and ongoing funding, a coordinated approach, and a comprehensive plan with widespread support and implementation, such as what is being put forth in LD 463.

We recommend the following changes to the bill:

- At subsection 1. B. Specify that the comprehensive state plan *may* include coordination among allied statewide programs and non-government organizations with a focus on nutrition, physical activity and obesity, i.e., Maine Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Maine Public Health Association, New England Affiliate of the American Heart Association, etc.
- At subsection 1. D. Change the language to state “a media plan to reduce the consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages with the definition of sugar-sweetened beverages (soft drinks, fruit drinks, sport & energy drinks) to be based on a major authoritative scientific body such as the DHHS/USDAⁱⁱⁱ or CDC^{iv}.”

NOTE: A sugar-sweetened beverage would have as a first ingredient water, followed by added sugars such as sugar or corn syrup.

- At subsection 2. Report. Extend the time for completion of the comprehensive state plan by six months to June 2020 to allow for the Obesity Care Coordinator to be hired and start plan preparation. Expect a report on plan preparation progress to the HHS Committee by January 1, 2020 and then report on progress implementing the plan every 2 years thereafter.

We urge you, the members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, to support LD 463 which will provide Maine with a coordinated approach and comprehensive plan to reduce rates of obesity. Thank you and we remain available as a resource to this committee and to answer any questions you may have.

ⁱ https://nccd.cdc.gov/dnpao_dtm/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=DNPAO_DTM.ExploreByLocation&rdRequestForwarding=Form

ⁱⁱ A Topline Report, from the study, An Economic Cost Appraisal of Physical Inactivity, Overweight, and Obesity Among Maine Adults. Conducted by Chenoweth & Associates, Inc. Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield, Maine and MaineHealth. 2007.

ⁱⁱⁱ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture. 2015 – 2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. 8th Edition. December 2015. Available at <https://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/guidelines/>.

^{iv} <https://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/data-statistics/sugar-sweetened-beverages-intake.html>