



Weekly Legislative Lowdown

March 31, 2025

Updates from the State House

It was a busy week at the State House, and our members really stepped up to be a voice for Maine kids.

- On Wednesday, **gun safety advocates and opponents** flocked to the State House to testify on multiple firearm-related bills. Maine AAP members, Drs. Allen Browne and Joe Anderson testified in favor of **LD 677**, **LD 1109**, and **LD 1126**, and in opposition to several bills supported by the gun lobby.
- On Friday, hundreds of testifiers showed up for public hearings on several anti-abortion bills. Maine AAP members, Dr. Genevieve Whiting and student Austin Vaughan testified in opposition to **LD 975**, An Act to Repeal Laws Allowing Abortion and to Criminalize Abortion, among other anti-abortion access bills.
- The Maine AAP and our members testified on other priority bills last week, including **LD 791** (behavioral health), **LD 1028** (maternal health care/birthing facilities), and **LD 896** (continuous MaineCare coverage for ages 0-6).



Dr. Allen Browne testifying in favor of Gun Safety legislation.



Dr. Genevieve Whiting testifying in support of access to safe and legal abortion.

Ways to TAKE ACTION:

Testify at an Upcoming Public Hearings

Upcoming Public Hearings:

Friday, 4/4

10am - LD 1061, An Act to Increase Community Support for Families in Maine - *Committee on Health and Human Services*

Tuesday, 4/8

1pm - LD 858, An Act to Ensure Behavioral and Mental Health Services Are Available to Students by Providing Grants to Schools That Contract for Those Services - *Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs*

You can provide testimony in-person, via zoom, or by submitting written testimony. Please email Madeleine at madeleine.desfosses@maineaap.org for more info or for assistance drafting testimony.

Other Ways to Take Action:

- [Send a message](#) to your lawmakers and ask them to support the **\$1 per pack tobacco tax increase** included in the Governor's biennial budget. This \$1 increase will prevent youth tobacco use and save lives.
- **Submit an op-ed or letter to the editor!** Please [email Madeleine](#) if you're interested in submitting a piece on any of the following issues:
 - Tobacco Excise Tax Increase — an excise tax increase on tobacco products would help to prevent Maine kids from using tobacco.
 - Medical Cannabis Testing (LD # TBD) — this bill will require testing in the medical cannabis program, establish a research group and fund public education on the risks of youth cannabis use.
 - Any topic of interest to you!

Federal Advocacy

Maine AAP President, Dr. Brian Youth, urges Mainers to take action to protect Medicaid access for Maine kids in op-ed piece.

Medicaid cuts would be devastating to care of Maine children

The effects on our communities would be felt immediately and well into the future.

House and Senate Republicans are attempting to use a process known as "budget reconciliation" to pass tax cuts and other priorities outlined by President Trump, and in so doing, Congress is considering significant cuts to Medicaid. As a general pediatrician with almost three decades of caring for kids in Maine, I have seen thousands of patients who rely on Medicaid (known as MaineCare in our state) as their primary health insurance, and I want to be very clear: Federal cuts to Medicaid would be devastating to the care that Maine children need and deserve.

The Medicaid program was designed to meet children's unique developmental needs and is the

backbone of health care coverage for 53% of Maine children (close to 140,000 kids). Nationally, Medicaid provides health coverage to 44% of children and youth with special health care needs, and 99% of children in the foster care system. But make no mistake in understanding that cuts to Medicaid will affect ALL children, regardless of whether they are covered by Medicaid, because our child health system depends on Medicaid to keep pediatric practices and children's hospitals open.

Since 2014, nearly one-third of Maine's labor and delivery units (9 of 29) have closed or announced plans to close, and in 2024, Northern Maine Medical Center in Fort Kent closed its child and adolescent psychiatric unit, leaving only three facilities in the state to care for youth needing inpatient psychiatric care.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Brian Youth, MD, of Scarborough is a pediatrician and president of the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

While we know the decisions for these closures are multifactorial, under-investment in Medicaid is likely a significant reason why these hospitals have had to cut their services. With over half of all births in many of Maine's rural counties covered by MaineCare, further cuts to the program will affect all patients, not just those on MaineCare who can no longer seek care at these rural hospitals.

I recently had the opportunity to meet directly with Sen. Collins, as well as with one of Sen. King's policy advisors, as part of a group of 400 pediatricians who gathered in Washington to meet with

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lawmakers to discuss the importance of preserving Medicaid. I appreciate Sen. Collins' bipartisan approach and her position of influence as chair of the United States Senate Committee on Appropriations.

I was able to share that Medicaid promotes children's health and well-being in many ways, including access to dental, vision and hearing services, and access to comprehensive/wrap-around care for children and youth with special health care needs that private insurance often does not cover. We reviewed how Medicaid provides coverage for essential mental and behavioral health services

for our children, including those for conditions like ADHD, autism spectrum disorders and substance use disorder services.

Beyond these direct services, Medicaid helps to ensure that Maine children grow to become healthy and productive adults. Children with Medicaid are more likely to be healthier than their uninsured peers; more likely to graduate high school and college; and more likely to be employed, earn higher wages and pay more in taxes.

Medicaid supports the entire child health ecosystem. It is integral to the viability of pediatric practices across the state, from

primary and subspecialty care practices to inpatient hospitals. In fact, Medicaid coverage has been critical in driving down the rate of uninsured children in Maine, which stands at 5.2% as of 2023.

As a pediatrician, it is clear to me that Medicaid supports the whole family. I understand the connection between the health and well-being of parents and caregivers and that of children. Medicaid (MaineCare) has supported generations of families in Maine. Any cuts to this program will have longstanding effects on our communities not only today but well into the future.

I urge you to please contact our U.S. senators and strongly encourage them to oppose any federal proposal that cuts Medicaid funding to our state, or limits access to benefits or services for Maine children and families.

An online version is available [here](#).

To echo Dr. Youth, please reach out to your U.S Senators, [Susan Collins](#) and [Angus King](#), and ask them to oppose any proposed cuts to Medicaid.

Interested in writing your own op-ed or letter to the editor on an issue that matters to you? Reach out, we'd love to help!

Upcoming Advocacy Events

April 7th: Advocacy & Power Building Training

Join Maine Public Health Association for an advocacy training on the basics of effective advocacy with decision makers, what it takes to build political power, and critical skills you'll need to advocate for health.

April 7th at 6PM on Zoom.

[Register](#)

Looking to take action? Check out of Advocacy Dashboard!

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If you're interested in joining our Advocacy Committee, please reach out to the Chair, [Dr. Joe Anderson](#), or [Madeleine DesFosses](#).

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