



## **Dedicated to assuring the health of Maine's people & places**

Good afternoon. My name is Becca Boulos. I am the executive director of the Maine Public Health Association, which represents more than 650 public health professionals across Maine. Public health professionals are committed to improving the factors that control our health, including clean air and clean water. As Maine's public health association, our sole mission is to assure the health of Maine's people and places. Our goal is for all Mainers to have the opportunity to lead healthy lives, regardless of their income or where they live.

I am here today in opposition to Maine DEP's proposal that Maine be exempted from certain air pollution control requirements established by the 1990 Clean Air Act amendments for the 13 states that comprise the Ozone Transport Region. In their petition, DEP is seeking to exempt all areas in the state with the exception of 10 cities in York County and Acadia National Park.

In 2017, Maine's DEP issued six air quality warnings. This year, we've already had two. According to a recent report by Environment America and Environment Maine Research & Policy Centers, in 2016, Bangor had 46 days of poor air quality, Portland and South Portland had 26 days, and Lewiston had 24 days. **In total, more than half of Maine residents experienced nearly a month or more of days with unclean air in 2016**, which is an increase from previous years. Poor air quality means the people of Maine and our visitors, especially children, the elderly, and persons with respiratory illness, may need to limit their time outside. Poor air quality means more youth sport practices are canceled, and more visits to the emergency room. It means missed opportunities to enjoy Maine's summertime activities, including lost revenue from tourism, as visitors may need to spend their vacation inside instead of on our lakes or in the mountains.

In 2017, Maine's Office of Tourism launched a new campaign, "This is Me," marketing Maine not as a destination but as a lifestyle. According to an article in the Kennebec Journal, Steve Lyons from the Office of Tourism states, "Our goal is for consumers to associate Maine with a distinct way of life. We want people to appreciate and crave the way of life we have." Many of Maine's tourists travel from other New England states and the mid-Atlantic region – the same

areas that are part of the OTR. What kind of a message are we sending to visitors from those areas when we say, “Come to Maine, the way life should be – with lower air quality standards.”?

I live in Cumberland County, one of the areas that would no longer be covered under the OTR if this petition is approved. I am an athlete, having competed in several endurance races, including 4 marathons and an Ironman. I love being outside – fly fishing, hiking, kayaking, and biking, but I think twice about being outside on poor air quality days. I am also an obesity prevention researcher, and given Maine’s high prevalence of obesity – the highest in New England – I am concerned about the increase in cancellations of outdoor sport practices and games for youth due to poor air quality, eliminating the opportunity for kids to be active – and to be outside, off their screens. I am also concerned about the implications for adults who, understandably, are discouraged from being outside because it may worsen their health, affecting their leisure time activities, and also, perhaps, their livelihoods.

Maine’s progress in reducing pollution gives us reason to celebrate and to keep moving forward – not to stop. There is still much work to be done. The petition put forth by DEP undermines the health of Maine residents, and it undermines regional cooperation that we depend on to reduce pollution from upwind states. It also sends a message that Maine wants others to do the heavy lifting while we sit back, idle. These aren’t the messages of a leader – and the result could be a domino effect of withdrawals, leading to worse air quality – not better.

DEP’s petition is irresponsible public health policy and MPHA strongly opposes it. We should be doing whatever we can to assure that all Mainers have the opportunity to lead healthy lives - regardless of where they live. By staying the course to reduce air pollution in Maine, we demonstrate our commitment to cleaner air for our most vulnerable residents, model investment and ingenuity, and dedication to ensuring the health of Maine’s people and places.