

Testimony of the University of Maine System LD 468, An Act to Protect Public Health at Public Institutions of Higher Education March 5, 2013

Senator Craven. Representative Farnsworth. Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. I am Ryan Low, Executive Director of Governmental and External Affairs for the University of Maine System. I am here today to testify in support of LD 468, An Act to Protect Public Health at Public Institutions of Higher Education.

In the fall of 2010, the University of Maine System convened the Employee Health Plan Task Force, on ongoing work group consisting of employees within the System. The Task Force's mission has been to recommend actions that allow UMS to continue to offer a competitive health care benefit, while reducing the cost trend going forward for the employee health plan. Among many of its recommendations, the Task Force encouraged the development of a team at each campus community to work on wellness and health improvement strategies that were appropriate for their campuses, including smoke free campuses.

Tobacco-free policy - effective date:

University of Maine Augusta	January 1, 2013
University of Maine	January 1, 2012
University of Maine at Farmington	July 1, 2012
University of Maine at Fort Kent	January 1, 2013
University of Southern Maine	January 1, 2013
University of Maine at Machias	September 1, 2013
University of Maine at Presque Isle	January 1, 2014

As you can see in the chart above, 5 of the 7 campuses of the University of Maine System are now tobacco free, with the final two going tobacco free within the next 9 months. Should the Committee decide to move forward with this legislation, we would ask that you consider an effective date that allows each of our two remaining campuses to implement their move to a smoke free campus in the timelines we've noted above.

I thank you for the opportunity to testify this afternoon and I would be happy to answer any questions that you might have.