



# Senator Susan DESCHAMBAULT

DISTRICT 32

Proudly representing the people of Alfred, Arundel, Biddeford, Dayton, Kennebunkport and Lyman

Dear Friends,

To say that 2020 has been a whirlwind would be an understatement. When the Legislature reconvened in January, I returned to Augusta eager to deliver for Maine families, workers, small businesses and communities. Like most people, my colleagues and I never expected to be grappling with a deadly pandemic and its devastating consequences, both personal and economic.

**“As Mainers, we solve our greatest problems by getting people around the table and working together.”**

Some challenges truly test our resolve. These times may be unprecedented but the way we respond to them isn't. As Mainers, we solve our greatest problems by getting people around the table and working together. It's why I often rely on you, my constituents, to ask questions, share stories and offer feedback. If anything, the challenges we now face only strengthen my commitment to make Maine a better place to live, work, raise a family and eventually retire.

In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, my colleagues and I didn't let up. This year, we worked to:

- **Fix our broken health care system** – I voted for a package of laws that put patients before profits. The new laws clamp down on surprise and abusive billing practices and cap the out-of-pocket cost of insulin.
- **Grow the Rainy Day Fund to a historic high** – We added even more money to the state's Rainy Day Fund, growing it to \$258 million, the highest amount since the fund was created in 1985.
- **Stand up for Maine workers and businesses** – Reliable, high-speed internet should not be a luxury in this day and age. This year, we passed measures to invest in quality internet access so students and small businesses in Maine can compete in the modern economy.

This year, we made a lot of progress but our work is not over. It's why I voted twice to reconvene the Legislature so we could finish delivering for you. I want you to know that I continue to work for you and your family. I still believe in the steadfast spirit of Maine people. Together, we can build a state that works for all. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me at [Susan.Deschambault@legislature.maine.gov](mailto:Susan.Deschambault@legislature.maine.gov) or by calling (207) 287-1515.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Deschambault". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional but personal style.

## CONTACT SUSAN:

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I always love supporting local businesses, including the Palace Diner.

## Making smart budgeting and saving decisions

Before the Legislature quickly adjourned to reduce the spread of COVID-19, lawmakers unanimously passed a lean, sensible supplemental budget that paid our bills, addressed some long-standing concerns and put aside substantial savings. We doubled down on our commitment to public education, investing an additional \$37.2 million in schools and \$1.6 million in career and technical education, providing students with critical skills that lead to good-paying jobs. We put \$15 million toward rate increases to support direct health care providers who care for Maine seniors, people with disabilities, and children with behavioral health needs. We also invested in public health and child protection services to support Mainers during this crisis.

However, we must be prepared for the economic consequences of this pandemic. **That's why lawmakers left more than \$100 million unspent, to cover gaps in this year's budget, and added \$17 million to the Rainy Day Fund, bringing its total to \$258 million — a historic amount.**

## Looking out for our seniors and their caretakers

As Mainers, we stand on the shoulders of the generations that came before us. We owe it to our seniors to be there when they need us most. In January, we started the session by increasing funding for Maine's nursing homes and residential care facilities. In light of the COVID-19 crisis, we also gave further support to nursing homes in the supplemental budget.

**To support the dedicated people who care for our seniors, we pushed to increase reimbursement rates for direct care workers.** A long-term care commission also released recommendations to strengthen this critical part of Maine's workforce. Lastly, we supported a bill to give Mainers who don't have a retirement plan through their jobs a convenient option to save for their future. These proposals were carried forward for further consideration.

## Supporting working families and local businesses

Throughout this pandemic, Maine businesses have gone above and beyond to keep people healthy and safe, whether it's shifting to curbside pick-up or to manufacturing personal protective equipment. Now, workers, business owners, and their families deserve our support.

Last year, we fought to ensure Mainers are paid what they're worth, from promoting equal pay for equal work and preventing wage theft to increasing the minimum teacher salary and defending retirement benefits for first responders. We took action against predatory student loan companies and questionable for-profit colleges that take advantage of Mainers trying to advance their careers through higher education. We also passed a first-in-the-nation earned, paid time-off law, which protects public health and allows workers to care for themselves or loved ones when sick.

**Part of sustaining our economy is training the next generation of workers. So this year, we increased career and technical education funding by \$1.6 million, along with an additional \$2 million for equipment upgrades.** We also provided \$2.5 million to support community college workforce projects.

When the Legislature reconvenes, we need to do more. There are pending measures to promote Maine-based companies and goods whenever taxpayer dollars are spent, create good-paying jobs, support emerging industries, and help Maine companies get back on their feet. We must act on them when we return to Augusta.



Honorary Pages, including Hailey Burke of Biddeford, pictured here, are invited to swing the gavel at the rostrum in the Senate Chamber.

## Investing in the next generation of Mainers

We must invest in Maine students now for the state to thrive in the future. In 2019, we increased funding for education at all levels in the state's two-year budget. As we cope with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, that won't be enough for schools to provide safe, quality education to students this year. Governor Mills announced this summer that the state would allocate an additional \$165 million to help schools safely re-open this fall. Our commitment to education is more important now than ever.

**“Attempting a project such as trying to pass a bill was extremely daunting and intimidating. Senator Deschambault was very helpful and supportive from the moment we contacted her. She championed the cause through each difficult step at the State House.”**

**- Sean Murphy,  
founder of Maine Lighthouse Trust**



Testifying in support of a bill to create a license plate that would support the Maine Lighthouse Trust.

## Coming together to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic

When Maine reported its first case of COVID-19, the Legislature unanimously passed laws to support Maine families, seniors, small businesses and public health. First, we approved a responsible spending package that prioritized funding for public health nursing, Maine’s CDC, and senior care. We expanded unemployment benefits, made sure students wouldn’t go hungry, prohibited utility companies from terminating service, and put \$11 million into a COVID-19 fund.

**Since March, I’ve worked with countless Mainers to help them solve problems, get unemployment benefits and access critical resources. The stories can be heartbreaking, but this is what we are elected to do — helping the people we represent.**

I’ve pressed state and federal agencies to improve small business programs, increase access to health care, provide rental and housing relief, and support heritage industries from farming to fishing. Legislative committees continue to meet, getting stakeholders and the administration around the table to come up with solutions.

As we look to reopen and rebuild, I’ll be here to make sure you, your family and our community don’t get left behind.

## Putting patients before profits

Too often the high cost of health care prevents hardworking Mainers from getting basic medical care. This is true whether it’s the cost of prescription drugs, outrageous health insurance premiums or surprise medical bills. Enough is enough — my colleagues and I worked to change that.

In 2019, we took on “Big Pharma” and won, passing an aggressive prescription drug reform package. These new laws improve drug price transparency, hold corporate middlemen accountable, create an affordability board, and allow for wholesale prescription drug importation from Canada. In recent months, we adopted a wholesale importation plan and sent it to the FDA for approval. We also passed a new law to hold drug manufacturers accountable for their role in the opioid epidemic. Maine is leading the way on prescription drug reform.

This year, I supported a suite of bills designed to put patients before profits by clamping down on abusive billing practices and on patient fees that nickel and dime families at every turn.

Over the last two years, we worked to make sure insurance companies don’t stand in the way of care by

enshrining patient protections into state law, improving coverage of telehealth medicine, and eliminating the waiting period for children’s dental coverage. We also stepped up to fill gaps in rural health care by investing in rural hospitals, funding ambulance services, allowing EMTs to work in hospital settings, and recognizing the care that physician assistants can provide. We made serious progress, but the COVID-19 pandemic underscores that we can’t stop now.



I worked closely with Julien Icher (left) and The Lafayette Trail organization on a bill to honor General Lafayette and his tour in Maine after the American Revolution to meet with old friends and colleagues.

2020 Legislative Report  
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## SURVEY: I want to hear from you!

1. What is your biggest concern in the wake of COVID-19?

- Keeping your family safe and healthy
- Making sure you can pay your bills
- Supporting struggling small businesses
- Addressing racial disparities in COVID-19 cases
- Reopening the state's economy
- Protecting good-paying jobs
- Other (please specify):

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What should Maine's focus be as we restart our economy?

- Providing direct relief to workers
- Keeping workers healthy and safe
- Providing direct relief to businesses
- Supporting Maine's tourism industry
- Investing in high-speed, reliable internet
- Other (please specify):

\_\_\_\_\_

3. COVID-19 has exposed key health care challenges in Maine. What is the biggest challenge you face?

- High cost of prescription drugs
- High cost of health care coverage
- Surprise medical bills and fees

- Lack of medical services in our area
- Other (please specify):

\_\_\_\_\_

4. COVID-19 has also exposed where Maine still needs work. What should be our biggest priority next year?

- Making sure more people can get health care
- Expanding high-speed, reliable internet
- Investing in education, career tech and child care
- Improving access to affordable housing
- Protecting natural resources
- Other (please specify):

\_\_\_\_\_

5. What grade would you give Maine's COVID-19 response? \_\_\_\_\_

I appreciate your comments. Please feel free to contact me anytime if I may ever be of assistance.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

To fill out this survey online,  
go to [www.mainesenate.org/2020Survey](http://www.mainesenate.org/2020Survey)