



# Senator JIM DILL

DISTRICT 5

Proudly representing most of Penobscot County in the Maine Senate

Dear friends,

This year has been unlike any other to say the very least. When the Legislature reconvened in January, I returned to Augusta energized, ready to deliver for Maine families, workers, small businesses and communities. Like most people, my colleagues and I did not expect that we would have to deal with the devastating health and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**“This year, we made a lot of progress, but our work is not over.”**

But we don't get to choose the challenges we face, and this year my colleagues and I didn't let up. We worked together to:

- **Fix our broken health care system** — I supported a suite of laws that put patients before profits. The new laws restrict both 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.

- **Secure Career and Technical Education funding** — We invested an additional \$1.6 million in Maine's career and technical education programs, which provide students with critical skills necessary for many successful careers, and \$2 million more for program equipment.

Our farmers are essential to our economy and our way of life, but unfortunately many have borne the brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic. **As chair of the Legislature's Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry committee**, I continue to push for more state relief to support our farmers in the wake of the pandemic.

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'm still here, fighting for you and your family. I still believe in Maine people. Together, we can build a state that works for all of us. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me at (207) 287-1515 or emailing [James.Dill@legislature.maine.gov](mailto:James.Dill@legislature.maine.gov).

Sincerely,

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Discussing the school lunch packaging program with RSU 34 Food Services Director Stephanie Salley.

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

When Maine reported its first case of COVID-19, the Legislature moved quickly to unanimously pass 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 while growing the Rainy Day Fund to \$258 million, a historic high.** We expanded unemployment benefits, made sure students wouldn't go hungry, and put \$11 million into a COVID-19 fund.

Since we adjourned, I've worked with thousands of Mainers to get unemployment benefits, access critical resources, and solve other problems. **I've heard heartbreaking stories, but fighting for the people I represent is what I was elected to do.** I've pressed state and federal agencies to improve small business programs, increase access to health care, provide rental and housing relief, and support farmers and fishermen. Key legislative committees have continued to meet, getting hardworking Mainers and the administration around the table to come up with solutions.

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## Looking out for our elderly neighbors and caretakers

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

To support the dedicated professionals who care for our seniors, we pushed to increase reimbursement rates for direct care workers. The long-term care commission also released recommendations to strengthen this critical part of Maine's workforce. These proposals need prompt attention when we reconvene.

## Making sure working families don't get left behind

Working families are the cornerstones of our communities and economy. The COVID-19 pandemic has hit them hard. **As we look to reopen and rebuild, I'll be here to make sure your family and our small businesses don't get left behind.**

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 get ahead. 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 sick loved ones.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit Maine, we quickly expanded unemployment eligibility. Unfortunately, shortcomings in the system, inadequate staffing and other problems left many struggling to access their benefits. Mainers deserve better. We have begun holding hearings to get to the bottom of these issues, but more action is coming. **We must fix our broken unemployment system, so that it works when we need it.**



Taking a moment in the Senate Chamber last year to speak with Sgt. Nunzio Biondello, a Maine World War II veteran who landed on the beaches of Normandy on D-Day.

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## Investing in Maine's youth and future prosperity

In order to thrive tomorrow, we must invest in our future today. **That's why education funding was a top priority in the bipartisan supplemental budget we passed this year.** We increased the state's share of school funding and increased our investment in career and technical education and job training. While I'm proud of what we accomplished, there's still more work needed to ensure every Mainer has the opportunity to succeed.

“I would like to thank Jim Dill for his service to the community of Old Town and the surrounding area. Jim has supported increases in the Homestead Exemption, helped lower property taxes, and sponsored a bill to pay 75% of Old Town’s cost of capping off the old landfill.”

- David Mahan, Former Mayor, Old Town



Talking with Congressman Jared Golden, who stopped by the UMaine Cooperative Extension lab — my day job.

## Supporting our businesses, farmers and natural resources

From shifting to curbside pickup to manufacturing personal protective equipment, Maine businesses have gone above and beyond to keep us healthy and safe in this pandemic. They deserve our support.

**Now more than ever, reliable high-speed internet is essential for businesses, education and telehealth.** This year, I fought alongside farmers and business leaders to expand internet access in underserved areas by passing a \$15 million broadband bond and making it easier for communities to get broadband grants.

**I worked with my colleagues to ensure farmers don’t lose all their time and investment if a processor mislabels their product** by establishing a process to correct a mistake. In the past two years, we’ve also helped farmers grow and sell more produce by promoting local foods in schools, supporting state food insecurity programs, and helping establish new food processing facilities.

Last year, a law I sponsored extended protections already provided to the lower Penobscot River upstream. This will help protect the health of our local economy and natural resources.

When the Legislature reconvenes, we need to do more, like passing measures to promote Maine-based companies and goods, create good-paying jobs, and help Maine companies get back on their feet.

## 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.

In 2019, my colleagues and I took on “Big Pharma” and won, passing an aggressive prescription drug reform package. 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 now leading the way on prescription drug reform.

This year, I supported a suite of bills designed to put patients before profits. We clamped down on abusive billing practices and 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 for 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 proves that we can’t stop now.



Leading a socially distant Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee hearing at the State House.



## 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):

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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):

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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):

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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):

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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)