



# Senator Heather SANBORN

DISTRICT 28

Proudly representing parts of Portland and Westbrook

Dear friends,

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

**“ I still believe in the steadfast spirit of Maine people. ”**

We don't get to choose the hand we're dealt. These challenges may be unprecedented, but the way we respond to them isn't. As Mainers, we solve our greatest problems by working together. It's why I often rely on you and others in the community to ask questions, share stories and offer feedback. If anything, the challenges we're now facing only strengthen my commitment to make Maine a better place to live, work, raise a family and eventually retire.

Before the pandemic hit us this year, Maine lawmakers accomplished a lot:

- **We improved our broken health care system** — As Chair of the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee, I helped develop a suite of laws that

put patients before profits and ushered the legislation through the committee process. The new laws put an end to surprise and abusive billing practices and cap the out-of-pocket cost of insulin.

- **We grew 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 it's been since the fund was created in 1985.

- **We invested in Maine's future by increasing education funding** — After increasing K-12 funding by \$115 million in the biennial budget, this year we invested \$37.2 million more in public schools in the supplemental budget.

This year, our legislative session was cut short by COVID-19 in mid-March, but my work as a legislator did not stop. I wrote daily updates for small business owners and their teams for nearly two and a half months. You can find them on my Facebook page. I also worked hard on unemployment issues, fighting against a tide of errors created by a poorly built computer system and a dramatically understaffed department. I voted twice to reconvene the Legislature so we could finish delivering for you. I'm still here, fighting for you and your family. I still believe in the steadfast spirit of Maine people. Together, we can build a state that works for everyone. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me at (207) 287-1515 or [Heather.Sanborn@legislature.maine.gov](mailto:Heather.Sanborn@legislature.maine.gov).

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# Investing in our youth and future prosperity

In order to thrive in the future, we must invest in Maine students now. That's why in the state's two-year budget passed last year we made it a top priority to invest in education of all types.

**This year, we allocated an additional \$37.2 million for public schools, \$2.5 million for community college workforce training, \$1.6 million for career and technical education, and \$1.2 million for adult education programs. While I'm extremely proud of what we accomplished, there's more work to do.**

Part of sustaining our economy is training the next generation of workers. Supporting these programs ensures Mainers can learn skills needed for good paying and in demand jobs.



With Eagle Scout Nate Hanscom and his parents, Staci and Brad. It's always so great to welcome students to the State House.

# Working together to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic

When Maine reported its first case of COVID-19, the Legislature quickly and 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 CDC and senior care while ensuring sufficient funds were available to get us through this crisis. We expanded unemployment eligibility, made sure students wouldn't go hungry, prohibited utility companies from terminating service, and put \$11 million into a COVID-19 fund.

Since we adjourned, I've worked with countless Mainers to solve problems, get unemployment benefits and access critical resources. The stories are often heartbreaking, but this is what we are elected to do — fight for 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 expedite fixes for our broken unemployment system.** Key legislative committees have continued to meet, getting stakeholders and the administration around the table to come up with solutions.



With Portland High School senior Marwo Sougue at the State House. I always enjoy showing my constituents around the Legislature.

# Supporting the local Maine businesses community

Throughout this pandemic, Maine businesses have gone above and beyond to keep people healthy and safe, whether it was a local shop shifting to curbside pick-up or a distillery making hand sanitizer. Now, workers and businesses deserve our support.

Earlier this year, I stood with Maine lobstermen and women when senseless federal restrictions threatened their livelihoods and personal safety. And when I saw that programs designed to help our small local businesses through the pandemic were falling short, I petitioned Maine's congressional delegation for real and meaningful help. **Our local businesses have faced some extraordinarily difficult times over the past months, and I've worked hard to help them through.**

When the Legislature reconvenes, we need to do more. We have bills ready to promote Maine-based companies, create good-paying jobs, support emerging industries and help local businesses get back on their feet, and we need to pass them right away.

# Protecting our environment and natural resources

In 2020, the Legislature built on our successes from last year to expand Maine's energy independence and encourage the hiring and training of Maine workers for jobs in the growing clean energy industry. **We also passed legislation to strengthen Maine's Renewable Portfolio Standard and expand solar power opportunities in our state.** A commission was convened to bring together government, industry and other experts to analyze the benefits of energy storage technology and to chart a path for Maine to expand its storage capacity, which will help lower emissions and increase use of renewable energy. And the Maine Climate Council continued its work on everything from reducing carbon emissions, to building resiliency in the face of climate change, to reducing heating bills, especially for low-income Mainers.

**“When our restaurants had to close because of the pandemic, Sen. Sanborn’s daily updates helped us navigate the resources we needed to stay informed. Her advice, understanding and leadership helped us get through an incredibly difficult time.”**

– Ilma Lopez of Portland, Owner, Chaval Restaurant



Testifying on legislation before the Legislature’s Taxation Committee.

## 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 will continue to be here to make sure you, your family and our small businesses aren’t 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 firefighters. 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.

**When the virus hit Maine, lawmakers 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 must fix our broken unemployment system so that everyone who is due money now receives it, and the system is stronger for hardworking Mainers during a public health or economic crisis in the future.

## Fixing our broken health care system

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 — as Chair of the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee, 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 now leading the nation on prescription drug reform.

This year, I helped pass 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 and improving coverage of telehealth medicine. I introduced Maine’s new law to eliminate waiting periods for children’s dental coverage, which caused the largest dental insurer in New England to drop these waiting periods not just in Maine but in the other states it serves as well. We also stepped up to fill gaps in our health care system by promoting telehealth, taking steps to ensure access to reproductive care, 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.



As Chair of the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee, it’s my priority to make sure our health care system works for you.

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)