



# Senator Bill DIAMOND

DISTRICT 26

Proudly representing Baldwin, Casco, Frye Island, Raymond, Standish and Windham

Dear neighbors,

When I gathered alongside my colleagues at the Augusta Civic Center in December to be sworn into office, I didn't know what this year would have in store. What I did know was that Maine families, children, seniors, veterans and small business owners were counting on their elected officials to lead them toward health and economic recovery.

**“I continued my fight to ensure the most vulnerable members of our society, our kids, are safe — especially when they're in state custody.”**

That's exactly what we did, from voting on hundreds of bills, to passing a bipartisan budget, to making a once-in-a-lifetime investment in Maine jobs, small businesses and the economy using federal funds. Here are some of the highlights from this year:

- **Fully funding public education at 55 percent.** This marks the first time Maine has met the 55 percent threshold mandated by Maine voters in 2004. This will ensure Maine schools have the resources they need while shifting the cost off of municipalities and property taxpayers.

- **Delivering on property tax relief.** We expanded the Property Tax Fairness Credit, improved the Homestead Exemption Program, restored revenue sharing and so much more. This will help Mainers remain in their homes and part of their communities.
- **Sending hazard bonuses to working Mainers.** Nearly 500,000 Mainers who worked throughout the pandemic will receive a \$300 check by the end of this year.

Finally, we also set funds aside for future emergencies, growing the Rainy Day Fund to \$492 million — a historic high.

I also continued my fight to ensure the most vulnerable members of our society, our kids, are safe — especially when they're in state custody. This has been a priority for me for two decades, and I share more information about this work inside.

I'm grateful for the opportunity to represent you in the Senate. Please don't ever hesitate to reach out with your questions, concerns, thoughts or feedback — after all, I work for you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Diamond". The signature is stylized and cursive.

## CONTACT BILL:

### MAIL

3 State House Station  
Augusta, Maine 04333

### PHONE

Office: (207) 287-1515  
Cell: (207) 650-4713

### EMAIL

diamondhollyd@aol.com  
www.mainesenate.org

## Fighting for quality, affordable health care

In the midst of the pandemic, we began this year by passing the COVID-19 Patient Bill of Rights, requiring all state-regulated health care plans to cover testing, screening and vaccination. **This was vital to our health and economic recovery. However, our fight to lower health care costs didn't stop there.**

We created the Office of Affordable Health Care to rein in health care spending and took on the drug companies to improve drug price transparency. We also created an emergency insulin program and increased access to HIV prevention medication. **These reforms will save lives.**

My colleagues and I also worked to ensure that health care coverage plans actually cover the needs of Maine people. We expanded access to preventive dental care and **made sure new and expecting mothers have access to vital care for the health and safety of themselves and their children.** At the same time, we defeated proposals to allow the sale of junk insurance plans to Mainers.

Finally, we passed a law ensuring access to telehealth care beyond the pandemic. Telehealth provides timely, quality care, especially for older and rural Mainers.



Celebrating Adelaide "Addie" Hall of Casco at her birthday parade

## Investing in heritage industries and our great outdoors

Maine's farmers, fishermen and foresters have formed the backbone of our economy for generations. **This year, we passed a law to support local farmers and reduce food insecurity by partnering farms with local food banks.**

We also passed laws to increase local foods in schools and provide resources for farms to maintain healthy, fertile soil. To further support farmers and fishermen, we invested \$20 million of federal funds in farms and food processors and \$10 million in seafood facilities.

Outdoor recreation continues to support the local economy here in the Lakes Region. **To continue this economic success, we invested \$40 million into the Land for Maine's Future Program, which helps us conserve lands for recreational and commercial use.** We also put \$50 million toward our state parks to fund basic maintenance and upgrades.

## Supporting our seniors and our veterans

In Augusta, we made sure to keep our seniors and our veterans at the top of our agenda. Maine nursing homes and senior living centers have been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. This year, **we provided critical funding to nursing facilities to make sure they can continue their vital work.**

Just as important is making sure hardworking caretakers are paid fairly, so **we raised MaineCare wage rates for our direct care workers.** I also supported measures to keep Maine's seniors in their homes by reviving a program that will allow the state to pay the property taxes of eligible Mainers. Seniors and Mainers with disabilities who qualify can stay in their homes, and the state can recoup costs later.

The high cost of prescription drugs can also be tough on seniors' pockets. To reduce this burden, we made sure to continue funding for the program that provides seniors with low-cost drugs. **I also backed measures that support our veterans by making it easier for them and their families to move to Maine and find jobs. We invested in mental health services for veterans and passed a law to help decrease their property tax burden.**

## Championing small business

Small businesses are the cornerstones of our communities and economy. **After a tough year, my colleagues and I worked hard to make it easier for small businesses to recover, grow and thrive.** We passed laws to support Maine's restaurant industry and opened up new economic recovery grants for businesses still struggling to rebound. We ensured businesses won't be penalized for increased unemployment because of the pandemic and created a new program to help lower health insurance costs for small businesses.

**We also made vital investments in the future of our economy, beginning with reliable, high-speed internet.** We funded programs to address long-standing workforce shortages, which will help Maine workers find good-paying careers and help businesses find qualified workers. We also worked to help new businesses open their doors and expand by creating a grant program, offering technical assistance and cutting red tape.



The Windham Delegation — Rep. Pat Corey, myself, and Rep. Mark Bryant — at a Windham Little League game

“Sen. Diamond is a tireless advocate for all Mainers, but especially Maine’s children. Years ago, when he taught my own children, I reminded them to always call him Mr. Diamond. Decades later, I still call him Mr. Diamond, and my kids call him Bill. We’re lucky to know him, and we’re lucky he’s our voice in Augusta.”

- Addie Hall, Casco

“Bill Diamond has the most common sense of anybody we’ve worked with in the Legislature.”

- Danny Shaw, Windham resident and co-owner of Shaw Brothers Construction

## Protecting Maine’s kids

Maine has once again been rocked by the deaths of several young children, in separate incidents, allegedly at the hands of their caregivers. We’re reliving an all too familiar pattern: A tragedy occurs, we vow to do better but then become complacent until the next tragedy. **It’s a cycle I’m committed to breaking.**

As your senator, I’ve made it a priority to pass laws that better protect Maine’s kids. This session, I sponsored a bill to increase the number of staff working in the unit of the Maine State Police that investigates computer-based sexual assault crimes against children. **I also sponsored laws that increase the penalty for sex trafficking a child and that strengthen domestic violence and abuse training for court-appointed child guardians.**

I also sponsored a bill that would drastically restructure Maine’s child welfare system by creating a separate Department of Child and Family Services. Though this measure failed, I’m not giving up on this fight.

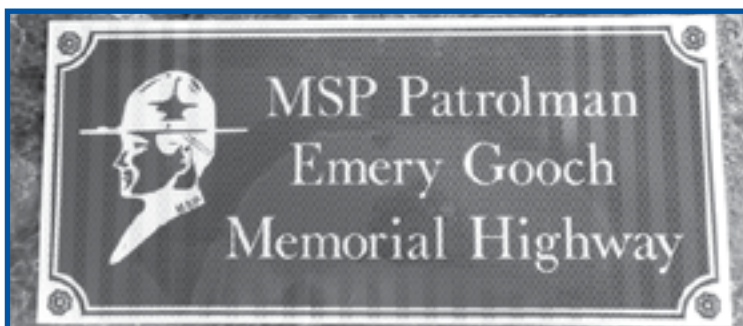
I’m heartened by the recently authorized investigation of Child Protective Services by the Office of Program Evaluation and Government Accountability, an investigation I requested earlier this summer. I’m hopeful things may finally be changing, but **I’m going to continue pushing for serious reform in our system until I’m confident that every Maine child is safe, especially when they’re in state care.**

## Honoring fallen State Troopers

This year marks 100 years of the Maine State Police force. This is a milestone worth celebrating, but unfortunately in those 100 years we’ve lost 12 Maine State Troopers in the line of duty. **To honor those we have lost and all those we may lose in the future, I sponsored a law this year to erect memorial signs in memory of each fallen trooper.**

The signs are placed on Maine’s roadways as near as possible to the area the fallen trooper patrolled, on both sides of the road. I hope that recognizing these fallen heroes on the roads they patrolled will be a meaningful tribute for the families, friends, colleagues and communities they leave behind. From the bottom of my heart, I thank them deeply for their service.

**In memory of Troopers Emery Gooch, Fred Foster, Frank Wing, Charles Black, Thomas Merry, Michael Veilleux, Det. Giles Landry, Lt. Rene Goupil, Tpr. Jeffrey Parola, Tpr. James Griffith, Det. Glenn Strange, and Det. Benjamin J. Campbell.**



Addressing my Senate colleagues about the urgent need to reform our child welfare system



With Rep. Jessica Fay of Raymond at an event at St. Joseph’s College

2021 Legislative Update  
**Senator Bill Diamond**  
3 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333  
www.mainesenate.org  
(207) 287-1515

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## Delivering on property tax relief

Hardworking Maine families and seniors have raised the alarm about skyrocketing property taxes all across the state. It's why I have made it my mission to deliver meaningful relief. Here's what we did this year:

- **Funded education at 55%:** For the first time since voters mandated the state pay 55% of public education costs, the state has fulfilled its obligation to students, teachers and taxpayers. This historic funding will help schools get what they need to get our kids back on track and shift costs away from property taxpayers.
- **Restored revenue sharing by 2023:** We laid out a plan to fully restore revenue sharing by 2023. This influx in funds reduces the amount property taxpayers have to pay for essential municipal services, such as paying our first responders, maintaining our parks and public spaces and plowing.
- **Boosted the Homestead Exemption Program:** We agreed to fully reimburse municipalities for the Homestead Exemption Program. This program allows residents to deduct \$25,000 off the value of their home before calculating their property tax bill. To benefit, Mainers must file an application with their local tax assessor by April 1.

- **Expanded the Property Tax Fairness Credit to cover 95,000 Mainers:** We also temporarily increased the Property Tax Fairness Credit, boosting the maximum benefit from \$750 to \$1,000 for eligible working families and \$1,200 to \$1,500 for seniors. We also permanently expanded eligibility so it will cover an estimated 95,000 Mainers. Eligible Mainers can access this benefit when they file their state income taxes.



With Rep. Lester Ordway of Standish and then-7th graders Shayla Harriman and Scarlett Akey at Bonny Eagle Middle School

Please visit [mainesenate.org](http://mainesenate.org) to sign up for my email updates.