



Senator DONNA BAILEY

DISTRICT 31

Proudly representing Buxton, Old Orchard Beach, and Saco

Dear Neighbor,

It has been my sincere honor and privilege to represent constituents like you in the Maine Legislature this session and I take my responsibility to our community very seriously. I believe it is my duty to seek out and listen to what our neighbors have to say and bring their priorities to Augusta. At the heart of what I do as your representative in the Senate is advocate for your needs and ensure that they are heard over the agendas of lobbyists and special interests.

“ We kept our promises on funding for education and worked to expand access to mental health services.”

Government works best when regular people come together to solve difficult problems, and there's nothing I'd rather do than roll my sleeves up and get to work to make sure our community can thrive.

This session, I was proud to introduce and support new laws that make health care more affordable and accessible, address the housing crisis, protect our freedoms, and ensure the well-being of veterans and older Mainers.

Some of the top highlights from this session were:

- **We improved access to lifesaving medication and worked to close pharmacy deserts.**
- **We clamped down on shady medical debt collection practices and hidden facility fees.**
- **We protected residents of mobile home parks from exploitation.**
- **We protected income tax breaks for retirees.**

Our work is far from over, but this newsletter will give you an update about the progress we've made.

These are just some of the highlights. We also kept our promises on education funding, worked to expand access to mental health services across the state, and took steps to protect our natural resources and the industries that rely on them.

I'm really proud of this work but I am also focused on the road ahead — the action that is needed to ensure that Mainers can afford to live, work, raise a family, and retire in the state we all love. Together, I know we can make this happen. So please continue to reach out with your questions, concerns, and ideas. After all, I work for you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Donna Bailey'.

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Rebuilding our working waterfront and coastal communities

Whether it is erosion, flooding, or high winds, the worsening impacts of climate change are here. After the severe winter storms devastated Maine's coastal communities and working waterfronts, my colleagues and I took swift action. **We cut red tape in the permitting process, making it easier for municipalities and people to prepare for and respond to damaging storms and flooding.**

As one of our final actions, we allocated \$60 million in financial assistance and storm relief. This funding fills gaps required for rebuilding and recovery, and the programs are designed to support the needs not covered by FEMA and other federal and state programs.



I was very happy to meet and congratulate the Bonny Eagle High School Girls Cross Country Team, which won the 2023 Class A State Championship. It was their fifth consecutive title. Way to go, girls.

Fighting for justice

To improve access to justice in rural Maine, lawmakers established two new public defender offices and authorized the creation of two additional offices to open within the next year. **The Legislature also passed a measure to improve access to treatment and recovery programs available through the courts.**

Additionally, we worked hard to strengthen our well-deserved freedoms. To safeguard the fundamental rights of Mainers to engage in public discourse, lawmakers strengthened legal protections against frivolous lawsuits designed to silence critics, stifle public debate, or simply harass people for speaking out on important issues. In order to increase cybersecurity, a publicly accessible list of companies that pose a risk to our security and safety will be published for all to see with the added guarantee that no state funds will be used in support of any business on the list.

Finally, to protect Maine people from threats and violence perpetrated by militarized extremist groups, lawmakers strengthened Maine's anti-militia laws.

Standing up for reproductive rights in Maine

Across the country, judges and politicians continue to restrict the reproductive rights of Americans. My Senate Democratic colleagues and I protected reproductive rights for Mainers.

The 131st Legislature was the first full legislative session after the U.S. Supreme Court reversed federal protections for abortion. As a result, the state took action. **In Maine, we protected and expanded access to abortion, and we defeated bills that would have eliminated or restricted access.**

This past session, Sen. Eloise Vitelli sponsored LD 780, the Reproductive Rights Amendment, which would have enshrined the right to abortion in Maine's constitution. It did not receive a two-thirds vote in the House or the Senate, so the fight must go on.

Delivering on health care

Too many Mainers struggle to pay for basic, essential health care, choosing between care and necessities.

That's why this year, we passed legislation that will protect Mainers from being taken advantage of when they are at their most vulnerable.

We clamped down on shady medical debt collection practices by prohibiting debt collectors from charging additional fees, using false representations when collecting debt, and prohibiting litigation against folks who are struggling financially.

We also passed laws to improve price transparency. A new law requires health care providers to give uninsured and self-pay patients good faith estimates. The law also requires procedure codes and out-of-pocket estimates to be available for insured patients.

Finally, we took steps to make facility fees more accessible and understandable to patients, while also prohibiting these fees for telehealth care services.



This year, the annual Ocean Park cleanup was even more extensive due to all the damage from the winter storms. But the community was not daunted, and even more people came out to help.

“Sen. Bailey not only listened to our issues, but also championed legislation for first responders that will directly impact the lives of those who protect and serve our community.”

- Chris Lawson, Saco Fire Department



I was honored to present a legislative sentiment to Shannon Coffey of Saco. She received the Meritorious Service Award and Stork Pin from the Saco Police Department. Congratulations, Shannon.

Delivering on prescription drug reform

No Mainer's health should suffer because they can't access the medication that they need - whether because of price, physical access, or addiction risks.

That's why we have worked hard to solve this problem from multiple angles so that the system as a whole improves. We passed a law to uncover whether or not insurance companies are playing games with how they cover brand name and generic drugs. **We also worked to improve access to specific prescription drugs by updating our insulin registration fee to level the playing field for nonprofit manufacturers, who may be able to offer this lifesaving medication at a much cheaper rate.** To help combat the opioid epidemic, we passed a law to improve access to non-opioid pain relievers as soon as they become available. The new law will ensure Maine patients have more options when it comes to managing acute pain.

Finally, we passed a law to improve access for Mainers in pharmacy deserts by creating a grant program for nonprofit Community Health Centers to develop or expand their pharmacy capacity. **These facilities serve more than 200,000 patients across the state and are critical to providing care to Mainers in rural areas.** I am proud of the positive steps we took this year to ensure that all Mainers can get the care they need.

Supporting good-paying jobs and Maine's economy

Maine's economy depends on the heritage industries that have powered our communities for generations, the small businesses downtown, tourism along the coast, and exciting new industries that have emerged across the state. I'm proud of the work we've done to support all sectors of our economy and the good-paying jobs within it.

This year, lawmakers voted to increase support for dairy farmers to at least 25 percent of newly identified production costs. This increase will help to stabilize nearly 150 dairy farms and 14,000 workers.

After a series of unprecedented wind and rain storms devastated small businesses across the state, we invested \$10 million to support small business recovery efforts. Affected small businesses and nonprofits will be able to apply for grants through the Department of Economic and Community Development.

To stay competitive in a global economy, we must make smart investments in research and development that will create jobs now and in the future. That's why lawmakers passed a bond that will unlock a \$25 million investment in Maine's rapidly growing

research, development, and commercialization industries. If approved by the voters, the funds will support innovation in key sectors: biotechnology, forest products and agriculture, marine technology, and manufacturing.

Finally, Maine has often led the way when it comes to protecting natural resources while spearheading new forms of affordable, clean energy. Last year, we passed a law that created the Maine Offshore Wind Renewable Energy and Economic Development Program.



Rep. Maggie O'Neil and I were so impressed with the Saco Middle School Samsung Solve for Tomorrow contest winners.

2024 Legislative Update
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Your voice matters. Send me your feedback!

Hearing from constituents, like you, is vital to my work in Augusta. Please fill out the survey below (or just send me your thoughts) to help shape next year's legislative agenda!

1. What is the biggest challenge facing you and your family?

- High energy costs, including electricity and gas
- Access to health care and affordable medication
- Rising rents, mortgages, and property taxes
- Inflation and the rising cost of living
- Lack of good-paying jobs
- Finding quality, affordable child care
- Other (Please explain):

2. What is the biggest threat to our economy?

- Need for more qualified workers
- Lack of affordable housing options
- Extreme weather conditions/climate change
- Attacks on our heritage industries
- Lack of supports for families
- Wages not keeping pace with inflation
- Other (Please explain):

3. How can we build a stronger Maine?

- Improve access to affordable health care
- Invest in training, education, and child care
- Address high energy and housing costs
- Grow Maine's energy independence
- Protect our natural resources
- Create and support good-paying jobs
- Other (Please explain):

4. What bills would you like to see brought before the Legislature next year?

5. How can I better represent you in Augusta?

Thank you for your comments and feedback!

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

To complete this survey online, go to
www.mainesenate.org/2024Survey