



Testimony in Support of LD 1801: “Resolve, to Increase Transparency and Evaluate Emergency Response Through a COVID-19 Review Commission”

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and the distinguished members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Nick Murray and I serve as director of policy for Maine Policy Institute. We are a free market think tank, a nonpartisan, non-profit organization that advocates for individual liberty and economic freedom in Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to testify **in support of LD 1801**.

Public health policy, like scientific understanding, can shift significantly over time. When legislative power is ceded to the executive branch in an emergency, especially under an extended state of emergency, officials should be held to the highest standard of accountability.

Despite the warnings from many public health officials and experts pre-2020 of confronting a respiratory virus outbreak with mass lockdowns and mandates,¹ our policymakers betrayed the public trust and pursued these medieval tactics anyway.

We are merely beginning to account for the staggering loss of life and increase in morbidity and mortality over that time, especially for younger populations who faced very low health risk from COVID-19, over 2020 and 2021.² Mortality from drug-related causes for Mainers aged 25-49 jumped significantly in 2020.³ There is little doubt that the hammer-and-nail approach taken by Gov. Mills that year played a role in inflaming an opioid addiction crisis which had already begun to spiral out of control.

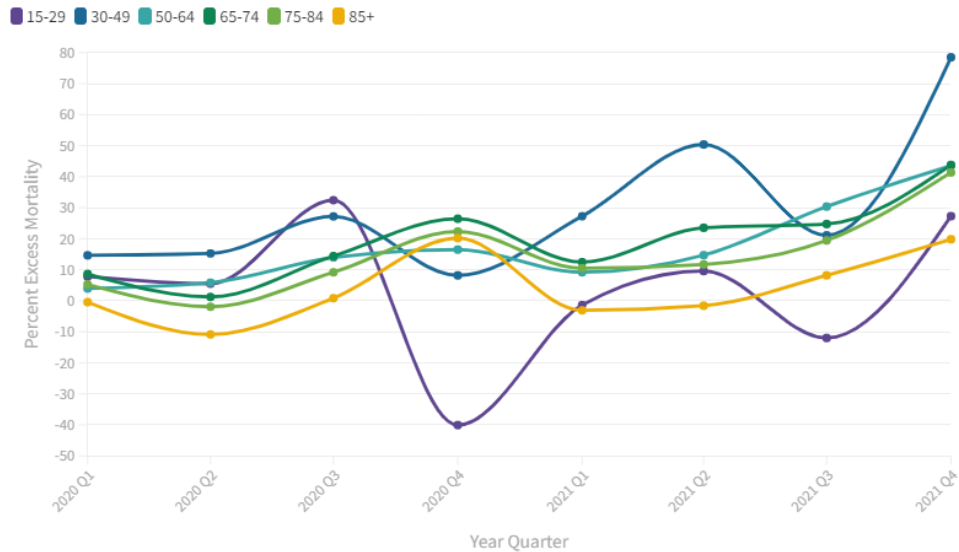
¹ Inglesby et. al, "[Disease Mitigation Measures in the Control of Pandemic Influenza.](#)" *Biosecurity and Bioterrorism: Biodefense Strategy, Practice, and Science*; Volume 4, Number 4, 2006. Re-published on AIER.org, May 21, 2020.

² [Fatal Conceit: Mortality in Maine During the COVID-19 Era](#) | Maine Policy Institute

³ Daley, Angela, Prianka M. Sarker, Liam Sigaud, Marcella H. Sorg, and Jamie A. Wren. "[Drug-Related Morbidity and Mortality in Maine: Lost Productivity from 2015 to 2020.](#)" *Maine Policy Review* 31.1 (2022) : 8 -18, <https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/mpr/vol31/iss1/1>

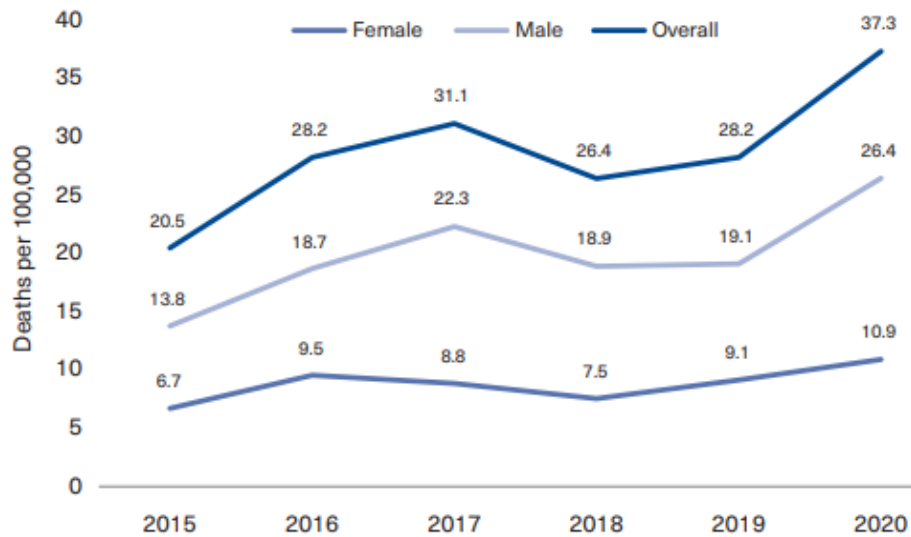
Maine Excess Mortality by Age Group

Compared to 2015-2019 quarterly averages.



Source: Source: CDC WONDER

FIGURE 4: Number of Drug-Related Deaths per 100,000 Population by Sex and Overall from 2015 to 2020



This is precisely why we need the COVID-19 Review Commission that LD 1801 proposes, to fully account for the decisions which took place among the Governor Mills and her secret group of confidants and administration staff, and rarely with legislators, during the 15-month long state of emergency declared to respond to the pandemic.

Unfortunately, even with the mountain of evidence available showing their failures, neither Governor Mills or any member of her administration has admitted that wielding lockdown-inspired policies in Maine was a grave mistake. On balance, they brought more harm than good to public health, social cohesion, and trust in government.

From low workforce participation⁴, to lagging business confidence,⁵ to the condition of youth, whether it be worsening mental health or lost educational progress,⁶ Mainers need answers to why their government pursued the policies it did. Were they merely following the orders of higher-ups in Washington D.C., or were they crafting policy based on a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis, taking into account the many parts of daily life Mainers rely on to maintain health and happiness? Was there an interest in reviewing the efficacy of particular mitigation policies over time, or did the administration simply buy into the ethos of censorship and propaganda that consumed the federal government public health apparatus?⁷

Please deem LD 1801 “Ought To Pass” and begin the formal process of understanding what occurred behind closed doors during the 15-month-long state of emergency. Mainers deserve full knowledge and transparency. Thank you for your time and consideration.

4

<https://www.pressherald.com/2023/05/02/as-summer-nears-most-maine-tourism-businesses-are-understuffed/>

⁵ <https://www.nfib.com/surveys/small-business-economic-trends/>

⁶ <https://www.pressherald.com/2023/04/25/maine-children-continue-to-struggle-in-wake-of-the-pandemic/>

⁷ [Notes on the Twitter Files \(19\)](#) | Power Line