

PRESS RELEASE
Engage Maine

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Reasonable Alternatives Presented to Balance State Budget

AUGUSTA – Engage Maine joined together with other mainstream voices today to present reasonable alternatives to Gov. Paul LePage’s budget, which would threaten Maine’s economy and eliminate important programs that serve Maine’s poorest individuals, people with disabilities, seniors and children.

“The state budget is about choices and priorities. And the priorities in the governor’s budget are wrong,” said Ben Dudley, the executive director of Engage Maine. “Our goal is to lay out several alternatives that could become part of a better solution to Maine’s budget challenges. We want to open the conversation and demonstrate that there are more responsible ways to solve our fiscal problems than to place hardships on all Maine employers, workers and families – especially Maine’s poorest and most vulnerable.”

Joining Engage Maine today were representatives from the Maine Medical Association, the Maine Small Business Coalition and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland, along with other supportive organizations and individuals.

Gov. LePage’s budget proposals would eliminate health care coverage for thousands of Mainers, while ending prescription drug coverage for elderly Mainers, reducing services and supports for the elderly and people with disabilities, stripping funding for preventative public health and eliminating state support for Head Start, among a long list of cuts to important programs that help our state’s most vulnerable populations.

“If you have no insurance, there is a 25 percent mortality increase,” said Dr. Robert McAfee, past president of the American Medical Association. “Simply because you don’t have access to health insurance, you are more likely to die from a preventable disease. This isn’t an economic or budget issue. This is a life-or-death issue.”

The proposals presented today includes restructuring MaineCare to make it more cost efficient and improving care for those receiving services.

“We have a health care crisis in this country, and the governor’s budget does nothing to address it. In fact, it makes the problem worse,” Dudley said. “Five percent of MaineCare enrollees account for 55% of program costs. We can better manage care, and enact payment reform that will improve outcomes and save money.”

In addition, the alternatives presented today included a proposal to restore Maine's 2010 tax rate for people earning more than \$200,00 per year while also asking the top 1 percent, those who earn on average more than \$733,000 per year, to pay their fair share with a plan that ensures their tax rate isn't lower than Maine's working families.

"Small businesses are the real job creators, and we are tired of the top 1 percent not paying their fair share of taxes. Cutting folks from MaineCare only passes on costs to the rest of us in the private market. Let's make the top 1 percent pay their fair share. It's the only responsible solution," said Nate Libby from the Maine Small Business Coalition, which represents more than 3,100 small businesses in the state.

Rather than destroy Maine's anti-poverty programs, the alternatives presented today reflect Maine's core values rather than sacrifice 65,000 people's health and well-being.

"The consequences of our failure to address this compelling need must not be borne by those least able to absorb it: the elderly on fixed incomes, those with chronic illness unable to meet the needs of their families, those unfortunate workers unable to find meaningful work in a down economy, and all others who, through no fault of their own, rely on our compassion and goodwill to assist them in their hour of need," said Marc Muttu of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland.

[Get more details here.](#)

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