Mills Administration Approves COVID-19 Prevention and Protection Grant Awards to Municipalities As Part of Keep Maine Healthy Plan

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Grants support Maine towns as they undertake critical work to protect Maine people and visitors from COVID-19

Governor Janet Mills announced today that her Administration has approved almost $9 million in grant awards to nearly 100 municipalities across the state under the Keep Maine Healthy Plan to support local COVID-19 public health, education, and prevention efforts. Following the announcement of the Keep Maine Healthy Plan earlier this month, the Maine Department of Health and Human Services approved COVID-19 Prevention and Protection Plans submitted by 96 municipalities. Today, the Department began notifying municipalities of their awards. The federal funding is expected to be distributed on a reimbursement basis as communities implement these programs.

> *"Towns and cities across Maine are on the frontlines of responding to COVID-19 and are well positioned to protect their residents and visitors alike," said Governor Mills. "Maine continues to have relatively low case counts, which is a product of our collective efforts, but as we reopen the vast majority of our economy, as more people interact, and as more visitors arrive from out-of-state, the likelihood of the virus spreading also increases. These awards are a deliberate effort to help mitigate that danger by helping municipalities implement measures that will protect the health of both residents and visitors alike."*
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> *"We look forward to this partnership with cities and towns," said DHHS Commissioner Jeanne Lambrew. "Continued commitment to physical distancing, face coverings and hand hygiene will keep residents and visitors safe this summer and fall."*

The Mills Administration worked closely with the Maine Municipal Association and the Mayor's Coalition on the creation of the municipal grants program.

> *"The Maine Municipal Association is pleased to know that over 90 cities and towns will receive nearly $9 million in grants for their COVID-19 related costs to protect their citizens' and visitors' health and safety," said Stephen W. Gove, Executive Director of Maine Municipal Association. "Under Governor Mills' Keep Maine Healthy program, funding to municipalities in all regions recognizes the vital front line role they play in partnering with the state on coronavirus public health support, protection and education. This financial support is particularly important and welcomed during our summer tourist season."*

More specifically, the funding incentivizes municipalities and Tribal governments to develop and implement their own COVID-19 prevention, education and protection plans by reimbursing municipal costs associated with public health education and prevention activities. These plans, for which the state is supporting up to $13 million in Coronavirus Relief Funds from the CARES Act, aim to help keep Maine people and visitors safe from COVID-19 by including one or more of the following:

- **Public education activities**: This could include printing and posting of existing State or national COVID-19 prevention information and developing local educational activities that are consistent with CDC guidelines.

Costs eligible for reimbursement would include staff time for planning and education activities and costs for signage, materials, website development, brochures and mailing.

- **Physical distancing and public health support**: This could include fences, tape, and signage for physical distancing in public spaces and closed streets; providing staff to limit crowds in front of restaurants, bars, beaches and other sites; new traffic pattern signage and education; purchases of personal protective equipment and hand sanitizer to be made available for staff, visitors, and for use at public locations; and extra cleaning supplies and additional staff time required for enhanced cleaning and management of public spaces and restroom facilities.
- **Local business assistance**: This includes staff time for a Code Enforcement Officer, Local Health Officer, or other person designated by the municipality or Tribe to be the local contact for educating local businesses on best practices. This may include following up on public complaints and, for certain cases, reporting to State officials when there is a potential public health violation that cannot be quickly resolved through educational means.

The municipal programs vary in size and scope. For example, the Town of Kittery was awarded $248,906 for a comprehensive campaign to promote and support public health measures among residents, businesses and visitors, including providing additional contact-free services in public spaces such as parks, marinas and municipal buildings. The grant will support educational materials and training, sanitation supplies, and the hiring of a seasonal Code Enforcement staff to assist with inspections, response to complaints, and random compliance checks of physical distancing, occupancy, and sanitation at businesses.

“The Keep Maine Healthy Program will support Kittery’s efforts to help our residents, businesses and visitors stay safe through the summer and fall seasons,” said Kendra Amaral, Kittery Town Manager. “I am grateful for Governor Mills’ focus on local implementation of the guidelines that serve to protect us all.”

The City of Bangor was awarded $157,957 to promote the “Mask Up for Me” campaign and other public health and business support efforts, including promoting outdoor dining at restaurants.

> *“We are grateful to the Governor and state officials for recognizing the tremendous work that the City of Bangor and its partners have been undertaking to educate residents and businesses on how to remain safe throughout the COVID pandemic,” said Bangor City Manager Cathy Conlow. “With over $150,000 in state grant funds, we are hopeful that our expanded efforts in educating businesses and residents will help maintain community resiliency throughout the COVID crisis.”*

The Town of Bar Harbor was awarded $127,000 for their campaign to support public health best practices including enhanced signage, public kiosks with free facial coverings and sanitizer for visitor use, and a “Parklet Program” to support efforts to bring indoor businesses outside.

Nina St. Germain, the Engagement Coordinator for the Town of Bar Harbor said, “The Town is pleased to receive the $127,000 award from the State of Maine. We look forward to being able to protect our local community while safely welcoming visitors to our Bar Harbor businesses.”

These local actions will be an extension of the Maine CDC’s work to prevent the spread of COVID-19. As part of *Keep Maine Healthy*, the Maine CDC is overseeing this initiative. Costs associated with approved public health education and prevention activities from June 8 through October 31, 2020 will be reimbursed. DHHS is considering a second round of grant funding for municipalities and expects to release further guidance soon.

These grant awards from the Mills Administration build on its support for municipal governments. Earlier this week, the Mills Administration also announced that it is dedicating $35 million in Coronavirus Relief Funding to help local and tribal governments and other qualified entities cover costs incurred as a result of COVID-19.

The awards come at a time when Maine, adjusted for population, ranks 7th lowest in the nation in terms of positive cases; 9th lowest in the nation in terms of deaths; 6th lowest in terms of patients ever-hospitalized out of the 36 states reporting; and 5th highest in the percentage of people who have recovered out of the 42 states reporting.

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