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The Campaign to End Antibiotic Overuse

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Maine Groups Urge Collins, Snowe to Take Leadership Role in Combating Antibiotic Resistance Crisis, Back AMA-Endorsed Bill

Baldacci Aide Announces Rep.'s Support for Bill at News Conference

Augusta, ME - A coalition of Maine's leading health, farming and religious groups today announced their support for bipartisan legislation to phase out the routine use of medically important antibiotics in healthy farm animals and urged Maine's U.S. senators to cosponsor the bill before Congress recesses for the year.

The announcement of support for "The Preservation of Antibiotics for Human Treatment Act" (S. 2508/H.R. 3804) by the Maine Medical Association, Maine Public Health Association, Maine Osteopathic Association, Maine Lung Association and Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and Maine People's Alliance, came during a noon news conference at the state capitol featuring lunch meats raised without the routine use of antibiotics.

An aide to U.S. Rep. John Baldacci (D-ME) announced at the news conference that Baldacci will cosponsor the bill, which also is cosponsored by U.S. Rep. Tom Allen (D-ME) and endorsed by the American Medical Association.

"We urge Senators Collins and Snowe to support this bill...Besides clean water and immunizations, antibiotics were arguably the most important public health advance of the 20th century," Jacob Gerritsen, MD, Chair of the Maine Medical Association's Public Health Committee. "Given that the development of a new drug is estimated to cost more than \$800 million and to take a decade or more, prolonging the effectiveness of available antibiotics is clearly essential..."

An estimated 70 percent of antibiotics used in the U.S. are fed to healthy animals to compensate for crowded, unsanitary conditions on factory farms, and half of those drugs are identical or nearly identical to antibiotics used to treat humans.

"Overuse of antibiotics has the potential to compromise human health by contributing to the development of antibiotic-resistant bacteria," said Kellie P. Miller, M.S., Executive Director of the Maine Osteopathic Association. "The bill seeks to enact some common sense measures to protect the public's health."

"Recent studies...have found not only resistant bacteria, but the antibiotics themselves... in waters downstream from the kind of industrial-scale livestock feeding operations that are the source of most meat we eat in the US," said Nancy Ross, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Environmental Policy at Unity College. "Antibiotics in the natural environment pose recognized problems for human health...I urge members of Maine's congressional delegation to support...The Preservation of Antibiotics for Human Treatment Act."