

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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118th MAINE LEGISLATURE

FIRST REGULAR SESSION-1997

Legislative Document

No. 1117

S.P. 339

In Senate, February 18, 1997

An Act to Assist Low-income Parents to Obtain Access to Education.

Reference to the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs suggested and ordered printed.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joy J. O'Brien".

JOY J. O'BRIEN
Secretary of the Senate

Presented by Senator PINGREE of Knox.
Cosponsored by Representative KONTOS of Windham and
Senators: CATHCART of Penobscot, PARADIS of Aroostook, Representatives: ETNIER of
Harpwell, LOVETT of Scarborough, PIEH of Bremen, SAVAGE of Union,
SNOWE-MELLO of Poland, TOWNSEND of Portland.

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

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Sec. 1. 22 MRSA §3760-J is enacted to read:

§3760-J. Parents as Scholars Program

1. Established. The department shall establish the Parents as Scholars Program, referred to in this section as the "program," to aid students in postsecondary undergraduate education who have dependent children in need. Parents enrolled in the program must be provided with a package of student aid that includes direct aid for living expenses equivalent to that provided pursuant to section 3741 and support services equivalent to those provided pursuant to section 3788. A family that ceases to receive aid under this section as a result of increased hours of, or increased income from, employment is eligible to receive transitional support services in accordance with chapter 1054-A.

The program must be supported with funds other than those granted to the State under Title IV-A of the Social Security Act.

2. Eligibility criteria. Families that qualify for aid to families with dependent children under this chapter may participate in the program in lieu of the aid to families with dependent children program. Eligibility for and the amount of assistance must be determined in accordance with criteria used in the aid to families with dependent children program. Applications for student aid for parents, if otherwise eligible, must be assessed pursuant to section 3788. If the assessment determines that the postsecondary education and training sought by the applicant is likely to result in employment that provides the wages and benefits necessary for the applicant to support the applicant's family without public assistance, then the application for the program must be approved.

3. Career planning. The department shall make available to applicants for, and recipients of, assistance under this section career planning and counseling services that assists them in choosing an educational plan that is likely to lead to self-sufficiency and provides students who have begun an educational program assistance to overcome barriers to completing the program and becoming employed.

4. Participation requirements. Students receiving assistance under this section must participate in some combination of education, training, study or work site experience, in accordance with section 3788, subsection 10, paragraph C for an average of at least 20 hours per week in the first 24 months that the students are engaged in an educational program under this section. Aid under this section may continue beyond 24 months if the student remains in an educational program and agrees to perform an average of at least 20 hours of work

2 site experience in addition to time spent in education or
3 training. During the 2nd 24-month period, some or all of the
4 direct student aid may be provided in the form of wages for
5 employment.

6 5. Application and decision. The department shall inform
7 all persons applying for aid to families with dependent children,
8 and all persons applying or reapplying for services under the
9 ASPIRE-JOBS Program, of the option to apply for the program and
10 give those persons the opportunity to apply for direct assistance
11 and accompanying supportive services in the same manner as set
12 out in section 3788, subsection 2. Those persons dissatisfied
13 with the decision of the department are entitled to a fair
14 hearing by an impartial hearing officer conducted pursuant to
15 Title 5, chapter 375.

16 6. Child support for participating families. Families
17 participating in the program shall assign their right to child
18 support to the department in the same manner as if they were
19 receiving aid to families with dependent children. The
20 department shall distribute the first \$50 of any child support
21 received in a month and that portion of the remainder, if any,
22 equal to the difference between the standard of need and the
23 payment standard, to the family. The State may use the remaining
24 child support to offset the State's cost of direct assistance
25 provided to the family under this section.

26 7. Rules. The department shall adopt rules to implement
27 this section. Rules adopted pursuant to this section are major
28 substantive rules, pursuant to Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter
29 II-A.

30 **Sec. 2. Parents as Scholars joint planning committee**
31 **established; recommendations; membership.** The Parents as
32 **Scholars joint planning committee, referred to as the "planning**
33 **committee," is established to study, develop and recommend**
34 **methods for making postsecondary education more accessible to**
35 **low-income parents. The joint planning committee shall make**
36 **recommendations for improving the administration of the Parents**
37 **as Scholars Program; improving coordination between the Maine**
38 **Technical College System, the University of Maine System, the**
39 **Department of Human Services and private and nonprofit business**
40 **and service providers; changing the program to increase the**
41 **likelihood of success in education and employment; and maximizing**
42 **resources available to meet the goals of the Parents as Scholars**
43 **Program.**

44 The planning committee consists of 15 members, appointed as
45 follows.

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48 1. The Governor shall appoint 5 members: one representative
49 from the Department of Human Services; one representative from
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2 the Department of Education; one representative of nonprofit
3 service providers; one low-income parent who is a postsecondary
4 student; and a representative of the Maine Aid to Families with
5 Dependent Children Advisory Council.

6 2. The President of the Senate shall appoint 5 members: 2
7 representatives of the University of Maine System, one of whom,
8 by virtue of job or position, represents the interests of women
9 at one of the campuses; one low-income parent who is a
10 postsecondary student; one representative of low-income parents
11 who has significant knowledge of public assistance programs; and
12 one member of the Senate.

14 3. The Speaker of the House of Representatives shall
15 appoint 5 members: 2 representatives of the Maine Technical
16 College System, one of whom is the gender-equity coordinator at
17 one of the campuses; one low-income parent who is a postsecondary
18 student; one representative of the business sector; and one
19 member of the House of Representatives.
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22 The planning committee shall submit a written report of its
23 findings and recommendations, together with any implementing
24 legislation, to the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human
25 Services and to the Executive Director of the Legislative Council
26 no later than December 1, 1997.
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30 SUMMARY

32 The purpose of this bill is to provide low-income parents
33 with greater access to postsecondary education, thereby offering
34 them an effective and permanent route out of poverty, reducing
35 their need for public support in the future and increasing the
36 educational aspirations of their children. This bill establishes
37 the Parents as Scholars Program to offer an alternative to the
38 aid to families with dependent children program for low-income
39 parents who want to participate in an education or training
40 program. The bill also establishes the Parents as Scholars Joint
41 Planning Committee to aid in implementing the Parents as Scholars
42 Program.
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