

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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ONE HUNDRED AND SIXTH LEGISLATURE

Legislative Document

No. 848

H. P. 634

House of Representatives, February 13, 1973

Referred to Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs. Sent up for concurrence and ordered printed.

E. LOUISE LINCOLN, Clerk

Presented by Mr. Murray of Bangor.

STATE OF MAINE

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD NINETEEN HUNDRED
SEVENTY-THREE

AN ACT Providing Funds to Supplement Needs of Disabled Children.

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

Sec. 1. Administration. The Bureau of Mental Retardation, Department of Mental Health and Corrections, shall assume the administrative responsibility for a program to supplement existing family and community financial resources. In addition, there shall be developed a Planning and Advisory Group to the bureau for the purposes of developing policies and procedures for the program. Acceptability of a client for services will be determined by the Bureau of Mental Retardation with the advice and consent of the advisory group. The planning group will consist of a representative from the Bureau of Mental Retardation, one from the department and 2 from voluntary national health organizations functioning in the State of Maine and concerned with a broad range of child disabilities. The former 2 shall be appointed by the appropriate commissioner and the latter 2 appointed by the Governor. The latter 2 shall serve without remuneration, except for travel and associated expenses. This group shall maintain records of expenditures and services and develop a proposal to meet the specific needs of this target group. A more definitive program, based on these 2 years of experience, shall be submitted to the 107th Legislature.

Sec. 2. Appropriation. There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Mental Health and Corrections, Bureau of Mental Retardation, the sum of \$135,000 to carry out the purposes of this Act. The breakdown shall be as follows:

1974-75

MENTAL HEALTH AND CORRECTIONS,
DEPARTMENT OFBureau of Mental Retardation
All Other

\$135,000

The purpose of the appropriation is to supplement, rather than supplant, existing family and community financial resources.

STATEMENT OF FACT

There are, in the State of Maine, approximately 4,000 children under the age of 5 afflicted with mental retardation, cerebral palsy, epilepsy and other physical deformities, or other severely handicapping conditions caused by birth defects or damages or disease or trauma subsequent to birth. Under the present laws of the State of Maine, although the families may be able to maintain their families, except for the extraordinary expenses incurred in the care of the severely handicapped child, the family must submit themselves to the indignities of a court process and declare themselves unable to care for their child if they are to obtain the needed services. As a result of such a process, rather than maintaining a continuous support of the family in the care of the child, the child then becomes fully dependent upon the health and welfare system of the State.

The need for such a service to families is well documented. Many families, in order to avoid the indignities of the court process, have been systematically destroyed. In turn, not only the child continues to need services, but the family also now needs services. It is important to note that this proposed pilot program will not supplant existing resources, e.g., insurance. We will attempt to assist the individual families to obtain existing services, utilizing these moneys to purchase services which are not now available due to lack of resources.

This program is intermediary to what presently exists. It is an attempt to avoid complete state dependence, e.g., either through the child becoming a ward of the State, or being institutionalized in our overcrowded institutions. It is not only seen as a more appropriate method of assisting children and families, but it is seen as a more economical approach.