

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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(EMERGENCY)
FIRST REGULAR SESSION

ONE HUNDRED AND NINTH LEGISLATURE

Legislative Document

No. 1627

H. P. 1422

House of Representatives, May 22, 1979.

Reported by Mrs. Masterton from the Committee on State Government. Printed under Joint Rules No. 2.

EDWIN H. PERT, Clerk

STATE OF MAINE

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD NINETEEN HUNDRED
SEVENTY-NINE

RESOLVE, to Study the Need for an Environmental Health Program.

Emergency preamble. Whereas, Acts and resolves of the Legislature do not become effective until 90 days after adjournment unless enacted as emergencies; and

Whereas, within the past several years there have been numerous incidents in the Maine environment of actual and potential health hazards; and

Whereas, these incidents have had both natural and manmade causes; have involved hazards in air and water; and have threatened or harmed residents in virtually every section of the State; and

Whereas, in some instances the cause of the harm is not known or understood; and in other instances the consequence of the hazard is not known and may not be known for a considerable time; and

Whereas, it is virtually certain that there will be future health hazards in the general environment; and

Whereas, it is one purpose of State Government to prevent and respond to these health hazards; and

Whereas, there is no single place in State Government for prevention and response; and

Whereas, it is vital to the public health to determine whether and in what form the State should have a program of environmental health; and

Whereas, in the judgment of the Legislature, these facts create an emergency within the meaning of the Constitution of Maine and require the following legislation as immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety; now, therefore, be it

Commissioner to conduct study on environmental health. Resolved: That the Commissioner of Human Services shall conduct a study of environmental health in Maine and shall prepare a report which shall include, at a minimum the following:

1. Current programs. A description of current State Government programs for, and capabilities to respond to, problems or potential problems caused by human activities and natural phenomena which cause health hazards;

2. Other jurisdictions. A description of significant environmental health problems, programs and capabilities of other states;

3. Recommendations. Recommendations by the commissioner for implementing and conducting an environmental health program for the State over the next 5 years, with specific assignments of responsibilities and an indication of cost, taking account of programs and capabilities of other levels of government and the private sector;

4. Other views. The views of other participants in the study, including private individuals and groups.

In conducting the study, the commissioner shall consult with other state agencies including the Department of Manpower Affairs, Department of Environmental Protection, Department of Educational and Cultural Services, the Workers' Compensation Commission and the State Medical Examiner. State agencies shall provide to the commissioner whatever assistance is requested. The commissioner shall consult with and solicit the views of private individuals and organizations, including the health community as represented by physicians and others.

The report shall be submitted to the Legislature's Joint Standing Committee on State Government not later than January 15, 1980.

Emergency clause. In view of the emergency cited in the preamble, this resolve shall take effect when approved.

STATEMENT OF FACT

This resolve requires the Commissioner of Human Services to conduct a study and to advise the Joint Standing Committee on State Government the appropriate form for an environmental health program for the State. The inquiry is to be both on programs specifically addressing environmental health and on "capabilities" to respond to environmental health problems, for example, a system to respond to natural disasters may also be appropriate to respond to an environmental disaster. The reasons for the study are given in the emergency preamble.