

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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FIRST REGULAR SESSION

ONE HUNDRED AND TENTH LEGISLATURE

Legislative Document

No. 1402

H. P. 1178

House of Representatives, March 19, 1981

Referred to the Committee on Education. Sent up for concurrence and ordered printed.

EDWIN H. PERT, Clerk

Presented by Representative Connolly of Portland.

Cosponsor: Representative Thompson of South Portland.

STATE OF MAINE

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD NINETEEN HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-ONE

AN ACT to Create a Blue Ribbon Commission to Study the Public Education Delivery System.

Preamble. Whereas, competency testing, teacher burnout and concern about early retirement, the increasing inflexibility in the schools between administration and teaching staff, the lack of meaningful parental involvement in public education, the ever-widening responsibilities of the schools for matters not previously assigned to schools and the lack of effective lay advocacy for education all combine to represent symptoms of a school delivery system that may be in need of substantial change; and

Whereas, there is widespread concern over the quality of public education, including teacher preparation, classroom size, basic skills, alternative education programs and the like; and

Whereas, education historically is a responsibility of the State assigned in large measure to local communities; and

Whereas, the State has a responsibility to provide leadership in education for local communities; and

Whereas, there is a need for a citizen's committee to examine the system and how educational resources may be better utilized; now, therefore,

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

Sec. 1. Special commission established. There is established a special commission to review and make recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature concerning the system of local public education and the deployment of resources by that system, which shall be known as the "commission."

Sec. 2. Membership; appointment. The commission shall be composed of 15 members who shall be designated and appointed as follows:

1. **Appointed by Governor.** Five members of the lay public, the majority of whom shall have children in public schools, named by the Governor, one of whom shall be a member of the State Board of Education.

2. **Appointed by President of the Senate.** Five members of the lay public, the majority of whom shall have children in public schools, named by the President of the Senate, no more than one of whom shall be serving on a local board of education. One member shall be appointed from the Senate.

3. **Appointed by Speaker of the House.** Five members of the lay public, the majority of whom shall have children in public schools, named by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, no more than one of whom shall be serving on a local board of education. Two members shall be appointed from the House of Representatives.

It is the intent of the Legislature to have a study conducted by persons with a vested interest in the outcome who are not employed by public schools, private schools or institutions of higher education.

Sec. 3. Duties. The commission shall:

1. **Examine the present delivery system for public education.** Review the history of its development and determine if the present systems still offer the best utilization of resources made available to education;

2. **Examine proposed alternatives to the system now in place.** Study alternate systems of education that might be encouraged through the use of public funding including, but not limited to, grants to private schools, the "voucher" system, tuition tax credit and reorganization of the present system; and

3. **Hold hearings throughout the State.** Hold hearings throughout this State to determine the degree of satisfaction of students, parents, teachers and taxpayers with the present system. These hearings shall also be intended to provide guidance about public awareness and desire for system changes.

Sec. 4. Meetings; officers; procedures. Members of the commission shall be appointed in a timely manner and shall hold an organizational meeting within 90 days after the adjournment of the Legislature at the call of the Governor.

The Senate representative to the commission shall preside until a permanent chairman is elected.

1. **Officers.** At this meeting the commission shall elect a chairman and vice-chairman from within the membership.

2. **Procedures.** The commission shall adopt any rules necessary to carry out its duties. The commission shall maintain minutes of its meetings.

3. **Staff.** The commission is authorized to utilize any qualified staff to carry out its duties.

4. **Public hearings.** The commission is authorized to conduct public hearings as it deems necessary.

5. **Reimbursement for expenses.** Members of the commission shall serve without compensation, but may be reimbursed for their reasonable expenses in attending meetings, procuring materials and supplies and for other related and necessary expenditures.

Sec. 5. Findings and recommendations. The commission may make preliminary recommendations to the Joint Standing Committee on Education prior to or during the second regular session of the 110th Legislature. It shall report its full findings and all recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature no later than 30 days after the convening of the 111th Legislature.

Sec. 6. Appropriation. The following funds are appropriated from the General Fund to carry out the purposes of this Act.

| | 1981-82 |
|---|----------|
| COMMISSION TO STUDY PUBLIC EDUCATION | |
| Personal Services | \$10,000 |
| All Other | 5,000 |
| Total | \$15,000 |

STATEMENT OF FACT

There is growing dissatisfaction with the quality of traditional public education in this State and across the nation. This dissatisfaction manifests itself in many ways, including the introduction of various proposals into the legislative process. Educational and political leaders are being asked to consider ways to improve teacher preparation, establish a limit on the number of students in the classrooms, expand alternative education programs, make it easier to teach children in the home, establish a voucher or tax credit system to allow alternatives to public education and establish statutory requirements to improve basic reading, writing and math skills. The independent and Christian school movements are spreading. There is great concern over the lack of parental involvement in public education, as well as the lack of strong lay advocacy for public education.

The intent of this bill is to provide for a comprehensive review of the state's

public educational system by a special independent 15-member lay commission. The commission will be charged with examining the current educational delivery system, as well as proposed changes and alternatives, and report its findings and recommendations to the 111th Legislature and the Governor for action.

It is hoped that through this process a strengthening of education will be achieved.