

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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1 FIRST REGULAR SESSION  
2

3 ONE HUNDRED AND TWELFTH LEGISLATURE  
4

5 Legislative Document

No. 371

7 S.P. 131

In Senate, February 1, 1985

8 Reference to the Committee on Education suggested and ordered printed.

9 JOY J. O'BRIEN, Secretary of the Senate

10 Presented by Senator Kany of Kennebec.

Cosponsored by Senator Hichens of York, Senator Matthews of  
Kennebec and Representative McGowan of Canaan.

12 STATE OF MAINE  
13

14 IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD  
15 NINETEEN HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-FIVE  
16

17 AN ACT Establishing a Pilot Project to  
18 Provide Liaison to Families of  
19 Children with Special Needs Within the  
20 Department of Educational and Cultural  
21 Services.  
22

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

25 Sec. 1. 20-A MRSA §7202-A is enacted to read:

26 §7202-A. Family liaison

27 The commissioner shall employ up to 3 persons  
28 within the Department of Educational and Cultural  
29 Services to act as liaison to families with excep-  
30 tional children.

31 1. Qualifications. The family liaison shall  
32 currently be, or formerly have been, the parent of an  
33 exceptional child and shall be qualified by training

1 or experience to perform the duties required in sub-  
2 section 2. At least one of the liaisons shall be the  
3 parent of a hearing impaired child.

4 2. Duties. The family liaison shall:

5 A. Be available to meet or talk with the parents  
6 of an exceptional child concerning the needs of  
7 the child and of the family, the appropriate fed-  
8 eral laws and state laws and regulations and the  
9 services available to the child and the family;  
10 and

11 B. At the request of the parents, attend and  
12 participate in the team meetings regarding the  
13 child's educational program.

14 The family liaison who is the parent of a hearing im-  
15 paired child shall also assist the commissioner in  
16 the establishment and implementation of the support  
17 programs established in section 7503, subsection 9.

18 Sec. 2. 20-A MRSA §7503, sub-§9 is enacted to  
19 read:

20 9. Support programs. The commissioner shall es-  
21 tablish support programs within the Governor Baxter  
22 School for the Deaf to provide services to the deaf  
23 community anywhere within the State and to their fam-  
24 ilies. The support programs shall include such ser-  
25 vices as:

26 A. Offering parent workshops, both at the school  
27 and outside the school, covering such topics as  
28 deaf culture, sex education, deaf adolescence and  
29 coping strategies for parents and siblings;

30 B. Developing a lending library on deafness to  
31 be housed at the Maine State Library;

32 C. Publishing a course catalog for the school;

33 D. Distributing a monthly news letter to parents  
34 of children attending the school;

35 E. Setting up programs which allow students to  
36 experience independent living conditions, learn

1 the responsibilities and benefits of operating  
2 commercial business activities, purchase personal  
3 items at the school and interact in informal so-  
4 cial settings;

5 F. Establishing a method for assisting parents  
6 to purchase specialized devices for the deaf; and

7 G. Arranging for banking services for students  
8 boarding at the school.

9       **Sec. 3. Implementation, pilot project, report of**  
10 **the commissioner.** The provisions of this Act shall  
11 be implemented as a pilot project and shall terminate  
12 on June 30, 1987, unless continued by Act of the Leg-  
13 islature. The Commissioner of Educational and Cul-  
14 tural Services shall begin implementation of this  
15 Act, including hiring at least one family liaison, by  
16 January 1, 1986, and shall report his experiences,  
17 findings and recommendations to the First Regular  
18 Session of the 113th Legislature.

19

#### STATEMENT OF FACT

20       The purpose of this bill is to establish a pilot  
21 project providing the position of family liaison  
22 within the Department of Educational and Cultural  
23 Services and to provide a series of support programs  
24 at the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf. Current-  
25 ly, when parents of exceptional children participate  
26 in the Individual Educational Plans and Pupil Evalua-  
27 tion Team process they must deal in an unfamiliar  
28 setting with an array of professionals who sometimes  
29 present things in technical language. In those cir-  
30 cumstances, the parents, who are the ones most famil-  
31 iar with the educational needs of their child, are  
32 often intimidated and are unable to participate in  
33 the process in an appropriate way. The result may be  
34 the development of an educational plan that is inap-  
35 propriate for the child, which frustrates the child  
36 and parents and subverts the purpose of the process.

37       This bill provides for up to 3 liaison positions  
38 within the Department of Educational and Cultural  
39 Services to be staffed by appropriately trained or

1 experienced parents of exceptional children. The  
2 liaisons would act as a link between the professional  
3 administrators, teachers and advocates and the par-  
4 ents. They would be responsible for working with  
5 parents to help them understand their rights, the  
6 various laws and regulations affecting them and the  
7 network of services available to their child. At  
8 least one of the 3 liaisons would be the parent of a  
9 hearing impaired child.

10 The bill also requires the Commissioner of Educa-  
11 tional and Cultural Services to set up a series of  
12 support programs at the Governor Baxter School for  
13 the Deaf to provide services to students at the  
14 school and to the deaf community and their families  
15 throughout the State. The family liaison who is the  
16 parent of a hearing impaired child advises the com-  
17 missioner in implementing the support programs.

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