

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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114th MAINE LEGISLATURE

FIRST REGULAR SESSION - 1989

Legislative Document

No. 851

H.P. 628

House of Representatives, March 21, 1989

Reference to the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs suggested and ordered printed.

Ed Pert

EDWIN H. PERT, Clerk

Presented by Representative DAGGETT of Augusta.

Cosponsored by Senator BOST of Penobscot, Representative CURRAN of Westbrook and Representative CHONKO of Topsham.

STATE OF MAINE

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

An Act to Provide Computer Technology to the Division of Eye Care.



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

3 **Sec. 1. 22 MRSA §3507**, as enacted by PL 1971, c. 88, is
5 amended to read:

7 **§3507. Powers and duties of the division**

9 In carrying out sections 3504 to 3511 the division shall:

11 1. **Regulations.** Prescribe regulations governing:

13 A. Maintenance of a roster of eligibles and issuance of
licenses+;

15 B. Fair hearing; in the case of an operator, desiring to
17 appeal any decision which he the operator deems to be
adverse to him the operator, there shall be appointed a
19 hearing board consisting of 3 persons, one to be chosen by
the operator, one to be chosen by the division and the 3rd
21 chosen by the 2. The decision of the board shall be final+;

23 C. Right, title to and interest in vending facility
equipment and stock+; and

25 D. Civil rights+;

27 2. **Other.** Prescribe such other regulations as may be
29 necessary to carry out the purposes of sections 3504 to 3511+;

31 3. **Surveys.** Conduct surveys to find locations where vending
facilities may be properly and satisfactorily operated by blind
33 persons and shall establish vending facilities as it deems
appropriate+;

35 4. **Management.** Provide such management and supervisory
37 services as are deemed necessary to assure that each such vending
facility will be operated in the most effective and productive
39 manner possible+;

41 5. **Plans.** Provide plans and specifications for proposed
vending facilities and equipment to the appropriate officer,
43 board or authority for approval prior to installation+;

45 5-A. Assistance with computers. Provide assistance,
including training, with computers to the blind and visually
47 impaired; and

49 6. **Other action.** Take any such other action as may be
deemed necessary or appropriate to carry out the purposes of
sections 3504 to 3511.

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Sec. 2. 22 MRSA §3507-A is enacted to read:

§3507-A. Computer information, assistance and training

The division shall provide information, training and technical services to the blind and visually impaired with respect to the use of computers and computer software.

1. Provision of services. The division may provide these services directly or may contract with any person, corporation or organization to provide these services.

2. Types of services. The services shall include, but are not limited to:

- A. Serving as a resource for sensory aids information. This service shall provide advice to blind and visually impaired people with respect to the purchase of computer hardware and software;
- B. Consulting with employers about the job;
- C. Conducting job analyses and recommending any necessary changes in job descriptions and equipment;
- D. Serving as a liaison in the purchase and set-up of equipment;
- E. Providing assessment and intensive training for blind and visually impaired persons;
- F. Conducting training with blind and disabled people;
- G. Consulting with counselors and clients with respect to user abilities and evaluation of materials;
- H. Serving as a central clearinghouse of information for blind and visually impaired people with respect to computer hardware and software; and
- I. Providing other services considered necessary or useful by the division to the blind and visually impaired.

Sec. 3. Appropriation. The following funds are appropriated from the General Fund to carry out the purposes of this Act.

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**HUMAN SERVICES, DEPARTMENT OF
Bureau of Rehabilitation**

Division of Eye Care

All Other \$28,900 \$29,800

The funds appropriated by this Act shall be used to contract for the services of a computer access specialist.

STATEMENT OF FACT

This bill provides the Division of Eye Care within the Bureau of Rehabilitation in the Department of Human Services with resources to assist blind and visually impaired people in the purchase and use of computer hardware and software. In addition, the division will analyze jobs requiring the use of computers and recommend any changes necessary in the job or equipment for the benefit of blind and visually impaired people.

The division will contract for a computer access specialist to assist and train the blind and visually impaired population. The computer access specialist will review job placements, act as a liaison with vendors and state agencies in the purchase of computer equipment and develop training courses.

The advent of rapid growth of the computer and other sensory aids has had a positive impact on educational and vocational programs. The most recent and potentially helpful sensory device for improving accessibility to the printed word has been the computer adapted with synthesized voice output.

Talking computers and optical scanners are now produced by several companies at a price which makes them feasible for both educational and vocational uses. The blind and visually impaired now have equal opportunity and access to the same printed word as their sighted peers, if they are provided with the proper equipment and training which best suits their needs and purposes.

There is a great need in this State for the use of computer technology for blind and visually impaired students and adults.

Many sensory aids and adapted computers have been purchased in the last few years and used for educational and vocational applications. However, the level of success has not been consistent with all persons served and service providers are

1 unable to keep pace with the seemingly daily developments in
3 technology, particularly in the area of voice output computers
and their related software and peripheral devices.

5 In the past 5 years, the Division of Eye Care has led the
7 way in obtaining sensory aids and computers for students in the
public schools and adults entering the work force. The division
9 not only purchased equipment and software but provided for
training in use of these devices to enhance the skills of its
clients.

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13 In the past 3 years, the Maine Center for the Blind has been
providing evaluation and training in computer use on a limited
15 basis within the confines of its rehabilitation center program.
In addition, consultation, training and on-site problem solving
17 has been provided by using vendors, contract tutors and some of
the professional staff who have picked up expertise on their own.

19 While this approach to service delivery worked in the past,
21 the demand for more professional, knowledgeable and available
resources and services has far exceeded the system's present
23 ability to provide it in a timely manner. The present service
delivery system is not cost effective in relationship to the
25 quality of service provided, e.g., vendors are not always good
trainers; tutor and trainers are too few and not readily
27 available; professional counselors and teachers cannot keep up
with the ongoing development in technology in the sensor aids
29 field; and inadequate technical support and consultation is
available to educational counselors and vocational counselors in
31 selecting appropriate sensor aids for their students or clients.