

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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Date: 6/8/07

L.D. 1055
(Filing No. H-501)

LABOR

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**STATE OF MAINE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
123RD LEGISLATURE
FIRST REGULAR SESSION**

COMMITTEE AMENDMENT "A" to H.P. 773, L.D. 1055, Bill, "An Act To Establish the Hearing Assistance Program for Low-income Persons Who Are Elderly or Disabled"

Amend the bill by striking out the title and substituting the following:

'Resolve, To Establish a Working Group To Study the Prevalence and Cost of Hearing Loss and the Use of Hearing Aids and Other Devices in Maine's Elderly Population'

Amend the bill by striking out everything after the title and before the summary and inserting the following:

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

Whereas, a growing number of elderly individuals who have a significant hearing loss are unable to afford hearing aids; and

Whereas, current programs provide inadequate assistance to prevent a growing number of elderly individuals from suffering significant hearing loss without remedy; 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

Sec. 1. Working group established. Resolved: That the Working Group to Study the Prevalence and Cost of Hearing Loss and the Use of Hearing Aids and Other Devices in Maine's Elderly Population, referred to in this resolve as "the working group," is established; and be it further

Sec. 2. Working group membership. Resolved: That the working group consists of the director of the Division of Deafness within the Department of Labor,

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1 Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, who shall be the chair of the working group; the
2 director of the Office of Elder Services within the Department of Health and Human
3 Services or the director's designee; and the following 7 members appointed by the
4 Governor:

- 5 1. One member from the Maine Academy of Audiology;
- 6 2. One member from the Area Agencies on Aging;
- 7 3. One adult consumer with a hearing loss who uses a hearing aid;
- 8 4. A representative from the Department of Labor, Bureau of Rehabilitation
9 Services, Division of Deafness Advisory Council's ad hoc committee on the late-deafened
10 and hard-of-hearing;
- 11 5. One adult consumer with a hearing loss, representing the deaf community;
- 12 6. One member from a consumer services agency that serves the mental health needs
13 of elderly citizens; and
- 14 7. One member from the Maine Center on Deafness; and be it further

15 **Sec. 3. Appointments. Resolved:** That all appointments must be made no later
16 than 30 days following the effective date of this resolve. Within 15 days after
17 appointment of all members, the chair shall call and convene the first meeting of the
18 working group, which must be no later than 30 days after the appointment of all members
19 is complete; and be it further

20 **Sec. 4. Duties. Resolved:** That the working group shall study the prevalence and
21 cost of hearing loss in Maine's elderly population.

22 In examining these issues, the working group shall specifically examine:

- 23 1. The number of elderly individuals who have a hearing loss significant enough to
24 affect their daily functioning, community participation or finances;
- 25 2. The impact of untreated hearing loss on elderly individuals who need hearing aids
26 but cannot afford them;
- 27 3. The operation and effectiveness of existing programs available to assist elderly
28 individuals with hearing aids;
- 29 4. Opportunities for coordination among existing state programs, or with the private
30 sector, to maximize the effects of available resources;
- 31 5. Approaches, opportunities, techniques and programs used in other states to
32 address the need for hearing aids by elderly individuals;
- 33 6. Options on potential approaches, techniques and programs in Maine for providing
34 hearing aids to elderly individuals, including different methods of program administration
35 and delivery so as to maximize program availability statewide and minimize overhead
36 costs;
- 37 7. The projected cost of developing and delivering a pilot program to provide hearing
38 aids to elderly individuals;

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1 8. The projected cost of taking no action to develop any program to provide hearing
2 aids to elderly individuals; and

3 9. The feasibility of funding from the state universal service fund a hearing
4 assistance program, to include grants to eligible low-income persons for the purchase of
5 hearing aids and subsidies for captioned telephone service; and be it further

6 **Sec. 5. Staff assistance. Resolved:** That the Department of Labor and the
7 Department of Health and Human Services shall provide, within existing budgeted
8 resources, necessary staffing services to the working group; and be it further

9 **Sec. 6. Report. Resolved:** That, no later than December 7, 2007, the working
10 group shall submit a report to the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and the Joint
11 Standing Committee on Health and Human Services that includes its findings and
12 recommendations, including suggested legislation for the Second Regular Session of the
13 123rd Legislature. The working group is not authorized to introduce legislation. The
14 Joint Standing Committee on Labor and the Joint Standing Committee on Health and
15 Human Services are authorized to submit legislation pertaining to the report.

16 **Emergency clause.** In view of the emergency cited in the preamble, this
17 legislation takes effect when approved.'

18 **SUMMARY**

19 This amendment replaces the bill and establishes the Working Group to Study the
20 Prevalence and Cost of Hearing Loss and Use of Hearing Aids and Other Devices in
21 Maine's Elderly Population. The working group shall submit a report of its findings and
22 recommendations, including suggested legislation, to the Joint Standing Committee on
23 Labor and the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services by December 7,
24 2007. The committees are authorized to submit legislation pertaining to the report.

25 **FISCAL NOTE REQUIRED**
26 (See attached)

COMMITTEE AMENDMENT



123rd MAINE LEGISLATURE

LD 1055

LR 1129(02)

An Act To Establish the Hearing Assistance Program for Low-income Persons Who Are Elderly or Disabled

Fiscal Note for Bill as Amended by Committee Amendment "A"

Committee: Labor

Fiscal Note Required: Yes

Fiscal Note

Minor cost increase - General Fund

Minor cost increase - Other Special Revenue Funds

Fiscal Detail and Notes

Additional costs to the Division of Deafness, Bureau of Rehabilitation, Maine Department of Labor and to the Department of Health and Human Services associated with participating in and staffing the working group can be absorbed within existing budgeted resources.