

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

The following document is provided by the
LAW AND LEGISLATIVE DIGITAL LIBRARY
at the Maine State Law and Legislative Reference Library
<http://legislature.maine.gov/lawlib>



Reproduced from scanned originals with text recognition applied
(searchable text may contain some errors and/or omissions)



STATE LAW LIBRARY
AUGUSTA, MAINE

124th MAINE LEGISLATURE

FIRST REGULAR SESSION-2009

Legislative Document

No. 564

H.P. 402

House of Representatives, February 17, 2009

**An Act To Promote Independence and Facilitate Employment for
Visually Impaired or Blind Individuals by Investing in an Effective
Vision Rehabilitation System**

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

Millicent M. MacFarland
MILLICENT M. MacFARLAND
Clerk

Presented by Representative DRISCOLL of Westbrook.
Cosponsored by Senator MILLS of Somerset, Senator JACKSON of Aroostook and
Representatives: BUTTERFIELD of Bangor, CLARK of Millinocket, GILBERT of Jay,
PEOPLES of Westbrook, TUTTLE of Sanford.

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

2 **Sec. 1. Appropriations and allocations.** The following appropriations and
3 allocations are made.

4 **LABOR, DEPARTMENT OF**

5 **Blind and Visually Impaired - Division for the 0126**

6 Initiative: Provides funding for one full-time Vision Rehabilitation Therapist position in
7 Rockland and 2 half-time Vision Rehabilitation Therapist positions in Bangor and
8 Houlton, including support staff, travel and office equipment, all contracted through The
9 Iris Network, to meet the vocational and independent living needs of increasing numbers
10 of clients, to improve expanded core curriculum services for blind and visually impaired
11 youth in transition and to meet established standards for client-therapist ratios.

12

13	GENERAL FUND	2009-10	2010-11
14	All Other	\$160,000	\$166,400
15			
16	GENERAL FUND TOTAL	<u>\$160,000</u>	<u>\$166,400</u>

17 **Blind and Visually Impaired - Division for the 0126**

18 Initiative: Creates one additional full-time statewide Personal Adjustment Counselor
19 position contracted through The Iris Network and funds shared support staff, travel and
20 office equipment to provide adjustment-to-blindness counseling and related services.

21

22	GENERAL FUND	2009-10	2010-11
23	All Other	\$80,000	\$83,200
24			
25	GENERAL FUND TOTAL	<u>\$80,000</u>	<u>\$83,200</u>

26 **Blind and Visually Impaired - Division for the 0126**

27 Initiative: Provides funds to create and fund a position at The Iris Network responsible for
28 designing and managing a comprehensive system of center-based and community-based
29 programs and services to meet the vocational and independent living needs of people with
30 vision loss throughout the State, including services designed to meet the vocational and
31 independent living needs of increasing numbers of adult clients and to improve expanded
32 core curriculum services for blind and visually impaired youth in transition.

33

34	GENERAL FUND	2009-10	2010-11
35	All Other	\$90,000	\$93,600
36			
37	GENERAL FUND TOTAL	<u>\$90,000</u>	<u>\$93,600</u>

38 **Blind and Visually Impaired - Division for the 0126**

1 Initiative: Supplements existing funding for the Maine Audio Information and Reading
 2 Service program operated by The Iris Network from studios in Brewer by bringing
 3 funding levels up from \$35,000 to \$70,000 in fiscal year 2009-10 and fiscal year 2010-11
 4 in order to improve service by expanding to a 24 hours per day, 7 days per week
 5 broadcast.

6			
7	GENERAL FUND	2009-10	2010-11
8	All Other	\$70,000	\$70,000
9			
10	GENERAL FUND TOTAL	<u>\$70,000</u>	<u>\$70,000</u>

11 **Blind and Visually Impaired - Division for the 0126**

12 Initiative: Creates a vision rehabilitation therapy recruitment and professional education
 13 program at The Iris Network as a means of recruiting qualified professionals to fill open
 14 positions and aiding succession planning for impending staff retirements by funding on-
 15 the-job training and continuing professional education and training opportunities,
 16 including internships, scholarships and fellowships designed to recruit and retain highly
 17 qualified vision rehabilitation professionals to provide vision rehabilitation therapy and
 18 allied services throughout the State in order to meet the expanding need for vision
 19 rehabilitation services.

20			
21	GENERAL FUND	2009-10	2010-11
22	All Other	\$90,000	\$93,600
23			
24	GENERAL FUND TOTAL	<u>\$90,000</u>	<u>\$93,600</u>

25	LABOR, DEPARTMENT OF		
26	DEPARTMENT TOTALS	2009-10	2010-11
27			
28	GENERAL FUND	\$490,000	\$506,800
29			
30	DEPARTMENT TOTAL - ALL FUNDS	<u>\$490,000</u>	<u>\$506,800</u>

31 **SUMMARY**

32 This bill decreases the ratio of visually impaired and blind individuals to vision
 33 rehabilitation therapists to more appropriate levels and improves the effectiveness of
 34 vision rehabilitation services for the increasing numbers of adults with vision loss and
 35 expanded core curriculum services for youth in transition by funding one full-time and 2
 36 half-time Vision Rehabilitation Therapist positions and one full-time Personal
 37 Adjustment Counselor position. The bill also provides funding for a vision rehabilitation
 38 program developer to design and implement a vision rehabilitation system. The bill also
 39 increases funding for the Maine Audio Information and Reading Service operated by The
 40 Iris Network in order to support expansion to a 24 hours per day, 7 days per week

1 broadcast. Finally, the bill provides funding to establish training opportunities, including
2 internships, scholarships and fellowships, designed to recruit professionals to provide
3 vision rehabilitation therapy and allied services throughout the State.