

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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125th MAINE LEGISLATURE

FIRST REGULAR SESSION-2011

Legislative Document

No. 765

H.P. 572

House of Representatives, March 1, 2011

An Act To Address the Documented Educational and Rehabilitation Needs of Persons Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired

Reference to the Committee on Labor, Commerce, Research and Economic Development suggested and ordered printed.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Heather J.R. Priest".

HEATHER J.R. PRIEST
Clerk

Presented by Representative DAVIS of Sangerville.
Cosponsored by Senator THIBODEAU of Waldo and
Representatives: CELLI of Brewer, FREDETTE of Newport, GILBERT of Jay, JOHNSON of
Eddington, O'CONNOR of Berwick, OLSEN of Phippsburg, RICHARDSON of Warren,
STRANG BURGESS of Cumberland.

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

6 **Blind and Visually Impaired - Division**
7 **for the 0126**

8 Initiative: Provides funding for 2 Certified Teacher of the Visually Impaired positions
9 and related costs including support staff, travel and office equipment, both to be
10 competitively contracted by the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired,
11 currently contracted through Catholic Charities of Maine, in order to address the
12 documented educational needs of students who are blind or visually impaired; to
13 satisfy disability-specific instructional requirements mandated by the federal
14 Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, known as the
15 expanded core curriculum, a curriculum of blindness-specific instruction pertinent to
16 transition-age students who are blind or visually impaired; and to eliminate the
17 existing waiting list for appropriate special education services for students who are
18 blind or visually impaired.

19

20 GENERAL FUND	2011-12	2012-13
21 All Other	\$140,000	\$145,600
22		
23 GENERAL FUND TOTAL	<u>\$140,000</u>	<u>\$145,600</u>

24 **Blind and Visually Impaired - Division**
25 **for the 0126**

26 Initiative: Provides funding for one full-time Certified Vision Rehabilitation
27 Therapist position in Rockland and 2 half-time Certified Vision Rehabilitation
28 Therapist positions in Bangor and Houlton and related costs including support staff,
29 travel and office equipment, all to be competitively contracted by the Division for the
30 Blind and Visually Impaired, currently contracted through The Iris Network, in order
31 to meet the vocational rehabilitation and independent living needs of increasing
32 numbers of adults with vision loss; to satisfy disability-specific instructional
33 requirements mandated by the federal Individuals With Disabilities Education
34 Improvement Act of 2004, known as the expanded core curriculum, a curriculum of
35 blindness-specific instruction pertinent to transition-age students who are blind or
36 visually impaired; and to meet established standards for client-therapist ratios.

37

38 GENERAL FUND	2011-12	2012-13
39 All Other	\$140,000	\$145,600
40	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

1 GENERAL FUND TOTAL \$140,000 \$145,600

2

3 **Blind and Visually Impaired - Division**
4 **for the 0126**

5 Initiative: Provides funding to establish one Program Design and Evaluation position
6 with The Iris Network, responsible for designing and evaluating a comprehensive
7 statewide system of center-based and community-based programs and services in
8 order to meet the vocational rehabilitation and independent living needs of the rapidly
9 expanding number of adults dealing with vision loss due both to aging and to age-
10 related eye diseases that cause vision loss.

11

12	GENERAL FUND	2011-12	2012-13
13	All Other	\$90,000	\$93,600
14			
15	GENERAL FUND TOTAL	<u>\$90,000</u>	<u>\$93,600</u>

16

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

19 Initiative: Provides funding for one Orientation and Mobility Instructor for the Blind
20 position and one Blindness Rehabilitation Specialist position and related costs within
21 the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired in order to address the documented
22 educational needs of students who are blind or visually impaired; to satisfy disability-
23 specific instructional requirements mandated by the federal Individuals With
24 Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, known as the expanded core
25 curriculum, a curriculum of blindness-specific instruction pertinent to transition-age
26 students who are blind or visually impaired; to meet the vocational rehabilitation and
27 independent living needs of increasing numbers of adults with vision loss; and to
28 meet established standards for student-teacher ratios.

29

30	GENERAL FUND	2011-12	2012-13
31	POSITIONS - LEGISLATIVE COUNT	2.000	2.000
32	Personal Services	\$83,678	\$117,187
33	All Other	\$15,000	\$10,000
34			
35	GENERAL FUND TOTAL	<u>\$98,678</u>	<u>\$127,187</u>

36

1	LABOR, DEPARTMENT OF		
2	DEPARTMENT TOTALS	2011-12	2012-13
3			
4	GENERAL FUND	\$468,678	\$511,987
5			
6	DEPARTMENT TOTAL - ALL FUNDS	\$468,678	\$511,987

7 **SUMMARY**

8 This bill addresses the documented educational and rehabilitation needs of blind
9 students and adults by funding approximately 50% of the professional staff shortage
10 identified by both:

11 1. The report of the stakeholder working group established to review the current and
12 future needs of blind or visually impaired individuals established pursuant to Resolve
13 2009, chapter 39; and

14 2. The recommendations of the Department of Education's corrective action plan
15 work group in regard to Disability Rights Center v. Maine Department of Education dated
16 July 28, 2010.

17 The bill addresses the immediate crisis in staff shortages identified by both of the
18 above-referenced reports, thereby avoiding a failure by this State to comply with
19 federally mandated levels of special education services for Maine students who are blind
20 or visually impaired.

21 The bill meets the rapidly expanding need for vision rehabilitation and independent
22 living services for adults dealing with vision loss due to both the general aging of the
23 population and age-related eye diseases that cause vision loss.

24 The bill provides funding for the following positions:

25 1. Two Certified Teacher of the Visually Impaired positions, to be competitively
26 contracted by the Department of Labor, Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired,
27 currently contracted through Catholic Charities of Maine;

28 2. One Orientation and Mobility Instructor for the Blind position and one Blindness
29 Rehabilitation Specialist position, both to be employed by the Division for the Blind and
30 Visually Impaired;

31 3. One full-time and 2 half-time Certified Vision Rehabilitation Therapist positions,
32 to be competitively contracted by the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired,
33 currently contracted through The Iris Network; and

34 4. One Director of Program Design and Evaluation position to be competitively
35 contracted by the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired.