

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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# 131st MAINE LEGISLATURE

## FIRST REGULAR SESSION-2023

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Legislative Document

No. 901

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H.P. 557

House of Representatives, February 28, 2023

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**Resolve, to Establish a Pilot Project to Support Farm  
Apprenticeships in Maine**

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Reference to the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry suggested and ordered printed.

*Robert B. Hunt*

ROBERT B. HUNT  
Clerk

Presented by Representative OSHER of Orono.  
Cosponsored by Senator BRENNER of Cumberland and  
Representatives: JAUCH of Topsham, LANDRY of Farmington, MEYER of Eliot, O'NEIL of  
Saco, SHAW of Auburn, Senators: HICKMAN of Kennebec, INGWERSEN of York.

1           **Sec. 1. Farm apprenticeship pilot project established. Resolved:** That, the  
2 Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry shall establish a pilot project,  
3 referred to in this section as "the program," for farm apprenticeships.

4           **1. Definitions.** As used in this section, unless the context otherwise indicates, the  
5 following terms have the following meanings.

6           A. "Apprentice" means a person a mentor plans to hire or hires under the program.

7           B. "Community" means the continuous commitment to a farm's community, including,  
8 but not limited to, selling products at farmers' markets, creating jobs and economic  
9 opportunities, participating in local food economies, hosting community events,  
10 donating to food pantries or participating in the Maine Senior FarmShare Program or  
11 the federal Women, Infants and Children Special Supplemental Food Program.

12           C. "Department" means the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry.

13           D. "Education and training" means the knowledge and skills a mentor plans to teach an  
14 apprentice related to agriculture, including through clear and appropriate instruction,  
15 hands-on training, instruction on farming principles and practices, with a focus on  
16 learning rather than participating in labor.

17           E. "Farm" means land, plants, animals, buildings, structures, ponds and machinery used  
18 in the commercial production of agricultural products.

19           F. "Mentor" means an owner, manager or operator of a farm who applies to hire an  
20 apprentice under the program.

21           G. "Sustainability," with respect to a farm, means that the operation of the farm,  
22 through its practices and mission, is designed to protect and improve the health of the  
23 land, its ecosystems and its people for the future, including, but not limited to,  
24 maintaining organic certification through the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners  
25 Association or a similar organization, refraining from using pesticides, the use of  
26 permanent beds, robust crop rotation, cover cropping schemes or agroforestry practices  
27 or the integration of livestock and crop agriculture.

28           **2. Eligibility.** In order to be eligible for the program, a mentor must have:

29           A. At least 5 years of experience as an owner, manager or operator of a farm;

30           B. A defined list of education and training for an apprentice;

31           C. A plan to hire an apprentice for at least 12 weeks;

32           D. Housing available to an apprentice or a plan to provide a housing stipend equal to  
33 or greater than the fair market value of a one-bedroom residence in the mentor's farm's  
34 county or metropolitan area as described by the Maine State Housing Authority; and

35           E. A plan to compensate the apprentice with wages equal to or greater than the state  
36 minimum wage.

37           **3. Application requirements.** An application to become a mentor must include:

38           A. A written proposal describing the farm operations, how the farm has demonstrated  
39 a commitment to sustainability and community and how the farm will meet the housing  
40 requirement or housing stipend requirement;

- 1 B. Documentation to support the description of the farm operation, such as a tax form;
- 2 C. A thorough description of the education and training that the mentor will use and
- 3 the mentor's strategy for ensuring the successful education and training of an
- 4 apprentice, including an outline of a mentor's training plans if available;
- 5 D. The number of apprentices, up to a maximum of 2, that the mentor plans to hire for
- 6 the upcoming season; and
- 7 E. The name and birth date of an apprentice the mentor plans to hire.

8 **4. Review of applications.** The department shall review applications submitted for the  
 9 program and award grants to mentors to hire an apprentice. Approval of an application  
 10 must be based on the quality and thoroughness of the submitted application, especially the  
 11 written plan to train and educate an apprentice. Priority must be given to a mentor who has  
 12 demonstrated a commitment to sustainability and community.

13 **5. Program requirements.** The following provisions govern the use of grants  
 14 distributed under the program.

- 15 A. A grant distributed to a mentor must be in the amount of \$5,000 per apprentice.
- 16 B. A mentor may use a grant only for the payment of wages for the apprentice for
- 17 which the grant application was submitted, except that if the mentor and the apprentice
- 18 decide the placement is not a good fit and the mentor hires a new apprentice, the mentor
- 19 shall notify the department of the change and may continue to use the grant to pay the
- 20 new apprentice.
- 21 C. A mentor shall pay wages to the apprentice equal to or greater than the state
- 22 minimum wage, and the hours worked by the apprentice must include education and
- 23 training activities.
- 24 D. A mentor shall refund any unused portion of a grant to the department.

25 **6. Report.** No later than December 1, 2024, the department shall submit a report to  
 26 the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over agricultural matters  
 27 with recommendations on whether to continue the program, including recommendations  
 28 on changing the eligibility requirements or number or amount of the grants awarded. In  
 29 developing the report, the department shall consider the importance of providing financial  
 30 support for the training of new farm apprentices each year, supporting the State's farmland  
 31 in sustainable ways to grow healthy, local food for communities throughout the State,  
 32 ensuring that individuals aspiring to grow food in the State can earn a living wage and  
 33 enjoy an acceptable quality of life while learning to farm and reducing the burden on  
 34 mentoring farms while educating and training apprentices. The committee may report out  
 35 legislation related to the report to the 132nd Legislature in 2025.

36 **Sec. 2. Appropriations and allocations. Resolved:** That the following  
 37 appropriations and allocations are made.

38 **AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY, DEPARTMENT OF**  
 39 **Bureau of Agriculture 0393**

40 Initiative: Provides one-time funding for grants to support a farming apprenticeship  
 41 program.

42 <b>GENERAL FUND</b>	<b>2023-24</b>	<b>2024-25</b>
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1	All Other	\$125,000	\$0
2			
3	GENERAL FUND TOTAL	<u>\$125,000</u>	<u>\$0</u>

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**SUMMARY**

5       This resolve establishes a pilot project within the Department of Agriculture,  
6       Conservation and Forestry to support farm apprenticeships.