

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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131st MAINE LEGISLATURE

FIRST REGULAR SESSION-2023

Legislative Document

No. 1429

H.P. 925

House of Representatives, March 30, 2023

**An Act to Establish a Navigator Position in the Department of
Health and Human Services for Families and Children Involved in
the Foster Care System**

Reference to the Committee on Health and Human Services suggested and ordered printed.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert B. Hunt".

ROBERT B. HUNT
Clerk

Presented by Representative FAY of Raymond.

Cosponsored by Representatives: GATTINE of Westbrook, MADIGAN of Waterville, PERRY of Calais, SHAGOURY of Hallowell, STOVER of Boothbay, Senators: HICKMAN of Kennebec, KEIM of Oxford, TIMBERLAKE of Androscoggin.

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

2 **Sec. 1. 22 MRSA c. 1071, sub-c. 10-B** is enacted to read:

3 **SUBCHAPTER 10-B**

4 **RESOURCE FAMILY NAVIGATOR**

5 **§4087-E. Resource family navigator**

6 The resource family navigator, referred to in this subchapter as "the navigator," is
7 established as an independent navigator within the department who shall provide resources
8 and information to resource families. The navigator shall consider and promote the best
9 interests of the child and assist resource families and children in the child welfare system
10 receiving services from the department.

11 **1. Term.** The commissioner shall appoint one person as the navigator to administer
12 the navigator program for a 6-year term. The navigator may only be removed or dismissed
13 for cause. The navigator may hire additional personnel if resources are available.

14 **2. Services.** The navigator may provide the following services for resource families
15 and children in the child welfare system who request assistance or make inquiries of the
16 navigator:

17 A. Identify and coordinate existing resources;

18 B. Advocate within the department for assistance and to solve problems; and

19 C. Provide referrals to available resources and information about the means of
20 obtaining services from the department.

21 The navigator shall develop collaborative working relationships within offices within the
22 department, social service agencies and other organizations providing services.

23 **3. Access to records.** As necessary for carrying out the navigator's duties, the
24 department shall provide access to the files and records of the department to the navigator
25 for the purposes of providing the services in subsection 2. The navigator shall maintain the
26 confidentiality of all information and records obtained under this subsection.

27 **4. Confidentiality of records.** Information held by and records and case-specific
28 reports maintained by the navigator are confidential. Disclosure may be made as allowed
29 or required in accordance with the provisions of section 4008, subsections 2 and 3.
30 Unlawful dissemination is subject to the provisions of section 4008, subsection 4.

31 **Sec. 2. Report.** The resource family navigator established in the Maine Revised
32 Statutes, Title 22, section 4087-E shall, no later than December 6, 2023, submit a report to
33 the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services with the number of people
34 served by the resource family navigator and a description of the issues addressed by the
35 navigator. The committee may report out legislation to the Second Regular Session of the
36 131st Legislature relating to the report.

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SUMMARY

This bill establishes a navigator position within the Department of Health and Human Services to provide assistance to resource families and foster families caring for children involved in the child welfare system. The position is appointed by the Commissioner of Health and Human Services for a 6-year term and may be dismissed only for cause. The navigator provides assistance to resource families, foster parents and children who request assistance with identifying resources, advocating within the department and agencies providing resources and providing referrals. The navigator must be given access to department records and files for the purposes of providing services; those records remain confidential and may be disclosed only in accordance with existing law.

The bill also requires the navigator to report to the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services and authorizes the committee to report out legislation related to the report.