

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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131st MAINE LEGISLATURE

FIRST SPECIAL SESSION-2023

Legislative Document

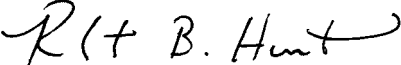
No. 1491

H.P. 946

House of Representatives, April 5, 2023

An Act to Support Rural Education

Reference to the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs suggested and ordered printed.


ROBERT B. HUNT
Clerk

Presented by Representative EATON of Deer Isle.
Cosponsored by Representatives: ANKELES of Brunswick, GRAHAM of North Yarmouth,
JAUCH of Topsham, WORTH of Ellsworth.

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

2 **Sec. 1. 20-A MRSA §253, sub-§10** is enacted to read:

3 **10. Rural education coordinator.** The commissioner shall appoint, subject to the
4 Civil Service Law, a rural education coordinator to increase the recruitment of teachers in
5 rural areas, support and improve access to teacher preparation programs for persons willing
6 to teach in rural areas and otherwise support educational needs in rural areas. The
7 coordinator shall work with institutions of higher education to support the purposes of this
8 subsection. By January 1, 2025 and annually thereafter, the coordinator shall provide an
9 annual report to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over
10 education matters summarizing the coordinator's activities.

11 **Sec. 2. Rural education support programs.** The Department of Education,
12 referred to in this section as "the department," shall implement the following programs to
13 support rural education in this State.

14 **1. Financial incentives for student teachers.** The department shall develop and
15 implement a pilot program to provide up to 20 financial grants each year in school years
16 2023-2024, 2024-2025, 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 to support qualified students that agree
17 to student teach in rural school administrative units. The program must provide up to
18 \$3,000 per qualified student to be paid to the institution of higher education in which the
19 student is enrolled to offset the tuition of the student. In order to qualify for a grant, a
20 student must, in accordance with rules adopted by the department, be enrolled in an
21 accredited institution of higher education in an educator preparation program and agree to
22 student teach in a rural school administrative unit in this State. By January 1, 2027, the
23 department shall report to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having
24 jurisdiction over education matters the results of the pilot program and any
25 recommendations for continuing the program. The committee, after receiving the report,
26 may report out a bill to extend the program or to otherwise support rural education in the
27 State.

28 **2. Financial incentives for teachers.** The department shall develop and implement a
29 one-time program to provide up to 15 financial stipends, not to exceed \$10,000 each, to
30 qualified teachers in rural school administrative units to support the teachers' continuing
31 education. In order to qualify for a stipend, a teacher must, in accordance with rules
32 adopted by the department, teach in a rural school administrative unit in the State, be
33 engaged in continuing education to further the teacher's professional development,
34 including, but not limited to, education leading to a credential to teach in a dual enrollment
35 program, such as the program described in the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, chapter
36 208-A, and agree to continue to teach in a rural school administrative unit in the State for
37 at least 4 years. The department shall adopt routine technical rules to implement this
38 subsection pursuant to Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

39 **SUMMARY**

40 This bill does the following.

41 1. It requires the Commissioner of Education to appoint a rural education coordinator
42 to increase the recruitment of teachers in rural areas, support and improve access to teacher

1 preparation programs for persons willing to teach in rural areas and otherwise support
2 educational needs in rural areas.

3 2. It directs the Department of Education to develop and implement a pilot program to
4 provide up to 20 financial grants each year in school years 2023-2024, 2024-2025, 2025-
5 2026 and 2026-2027 to support qualified students that agree to student teach in rural school
6 administrative units.

7 3. It directs the department to develop and implement a one-time program to provide
8 up to 15 financial stipends to qualified teachers in rural school administrative units to
9 support the teachers' continuing education.