

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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131st MAINE LEGISLATURE

FIRST SPECIAL SESSION-2023

Legislative Document

No. 1718

H.P. 1107

House of Representatives, April 18, 2023

**An Act to Encourage Participation in Maine's Essential Support
Workforce Through Access to Higher Education**

(EMERGENCY)

Reference to the Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and
Business suggested and ordered printed.

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

ROBERT B. HUNT
Clerk

Presented by Representative MEYER of Eliot.
Cosponsored by Senator DAUGHTRY of Cumberland and
Representatives: BRENNAN of Portland, CLOUTIER of Lewiston, FAY of Raymond,
GATTINE of Westbrook, TERRY of Gorham.

1 **2. Eligible postsecondary educational institution.** "Eligible postsecondary
2 educational institution" means the University of Maine System, the Maine Community
3 College System or the Maine Maritime Academy.

4 **3. Eligible worker.** "Eligible worker" means an essential support worker who:

5 A. Is a Maine resident;

6 B. Currently works as an essential support worker; and

7 C. Has worked at least 30 hours per week as an essential support worker in the State
8 for one year or more.

9 **4. Essential support worker.** "Essential support worker" has the same meaning as in
10 Title 22, section 7401, subsection 3.

11 **5. Fund.** "Fund" means the Essential Support Worker Tuition Grant Fund under section
12 1100-JJ.

13 **6. Participating employer.** "Participating employer" means a person who:

14 A. Provides essential support services in in-home, community or institutional settings
15 reimbursed by the Department of Health and Human Services under the MaineCare
16 program or another state-funded program;

17 B. Employs an essential support worker; and

18 C. Registers as a participating employer with the authority.

19 **7. Program.** "Program" means the Essential Support Worker Tuition Grant Program
20 under section 1100-II.

21 **§1100-II. Essential Support Worker Tuition Grant Program**

22 **1. Essential Support Worker Tuition Grant Program established.** The Essential
23 Support Worker Tuition Grant Program is established. The authority shall administer the
24 program. The program provides to an eligible worker or a member of the eligible worker's
25 family who qualifies as an eligible person an education voucher up to the amount of one
26 year's tuition to an eligible postsecondary educational institution for each year the eligible
27 worker works as an essential support worker, up to 4 years.

28 **2. Program criteria.** The program criteria are as follows:

29 A. An employer of an eligible worker must apply to the authority for approval to
30 become a participating employer;

31 B. A participating employer must provide certification that the eligible worker worked
32 as an essential support worker for the employer at least 30 hours per week for one year;

33 C. The eligible person using the education voucher completes an application for federal
34 student financial aid programs for which the person may be eligible for the academic
35 year for which the person applies, and the person must accept all available federal and
36 state grants and scholarships, including from a federal Pell Grant or any other merit-
37 based or needs-based grant or scholarship and other sources of funding;

38 D. The value of the education voucher amount is limited to the amount of the cost of
39 tuition at an eligible postsecondary educational institution, less any financial aid

1 received under paragraph C, not including a grant awarded under this subsection, that
2 the eligible person is not required to repay;

3 E. The total value of an education voucher is capped at \$4,000;

4 F. An education voucher is good for up to 5 years after it is awarded;

5 G. An eligible worker may earn up to 4 education vouchers total and the vouchers do
6 not have to be earned in successive years;

7 H. Education vouchers may be combined for use in one year to cover a higher cost of
8 tuition at an eligible postsecondary educational institution; and

9 I. A participating employer or eligible person who does not comply with the terms of
10 the program may be required to repay the amount of any education voucher granted or
11 may be prohibited from future participation in the program.

12 **§1100-JJ. Essential Support Worker Tuition Grant Fund**

13 The Essential Support Worker Tuition Grant Fund is created as a nonlapsing, interest-
14 earning, revolving fund to carry out the purposes of this chapter. The fund must be
15 deposited with and maintained and administered by the authority. Any unexpended balance
16 in the fund carries over for continued use under this chapter. The authority may receive,
17 invest and expend on behalf of the fund money from gifts, grants, bequests, loans and
18 donations in addition to money appropriated or allocated by the State. The fund may not
19 exceed \$8,000,000, although it still may receive gifts, grants, bequests, loans, donations
20 and interest income. Money received by the authority on behalf of the fund, except interest
21 income, must be used for the purposes of this chapter; interest income may be used for the
22 purposes of this chapter or to pay administrative costs incurred by the authority, as
23 determined appropriate by the authority. Costs and expenses of maintaining, servicing and
24 administering the fund and administering the program may be paid out of amounts in the
25 fund.

26 **§1100-KK. Rules**

27 The authority may adopt rules to carry out the purposes of this chapter. Rules adopted
28 pursuant to this section are routine technical rules as defined by Title 5, chapter 375,
29 subchapter 2-A.

30 **Sec. 2. Appropriations and allocations.** The following appropriations and
31 allocations are made.

32 **FINANCE AUTHORITY OF MAINE**

33 **Essential Support Worker Tuition Grant Fund N440**

34 Initiative: Provides ongoing funds to support the Essential Support Worker Tuition Grant
35 Program to provide education vouchers to eligible workers or to a member of the eligible
36 worker's family.

37 GENERAL FUND	2023-24	2024-25
38 All Other	\$60,000	\$500,000
39		
40 GENERAL FUND TOTAL	<u>\$60,000</u>	<u>\$500,000</u>

