

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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131st MAINE LEGISLATURE

SECOND REGULAR SESSION-2024

Legislative Document

No. 2097

S.P. 890

In Senate, January 3, 2024

**Resolve, to Establish a Pilot Project to Alleviate the Staffing Crisis
in the Child Protective Services System**

(EMERGENCY)

Approved for introduction by a majority of the Legislative Council pursuant to Joint Rule 203.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D M Grant'.

DAREK M. GRANT
Secretary of the Senate

Presented by Senator KEIM of Oxford.

Cosponsored by Representative ARATA of New Gloucester and

Senators: BENNETT of Oxford, HICKMAN of Kennebec, TIMBERLAKE of Androscoggin,

TIPPING of Penobscot, Representatives: FAY of Raymond, MASTRACCIO of Sanford,

MILLETT of Waterford, Speaker TALBOT ROSS of Portland.

1 **Emergency preamble. Whereas,** acts and resolves of the Legislature do not
2 become effective until 90 days after adjournment unless enacted as emergencies; and

3 **Whereas,** the Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Child and Family
4 Services is experiencing a shortage of caseworkers; and

5 **Whereas,** this staffing shortage means that existing staff are overworked and in need
6 of assistance, which in turn limits the office's ability to provide necessary child protective
7 services; and

8 **Whereas,** this legislation establishes a pilot project for the recruitment and
9 employment of case aides to provide visitation supervision, referral and administrative
10 services as support for caseworkers; and

11 **Whereas,** this legislation needs to take effect as soon as possible so that new case
12 aides providing support to caseworkers may be recruited and begin their work; and

13 **Whereas,** in the judgment of the Legislature, these facts create an emergency within
14 the meaning of the Constitution of Maine and require the following legislation as
15 immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety; now,
16 therefore, be it

17 **Sec. 1. Case aides pilot project. Resolved:** That, by June 1, 2024, the Department
18 of Health and Human Services shall develop and implement a pilot project in the
19 department's Office of Child and Family Services for the recruitment and employment of
20 case aides in the child protective services system for those areas of the child protective
21 services system where there is the greatest need for assistance, as determined by the
22 department. The pilot project must include a public recruitment campaign that targets
23 retirees and other persons not in the workforce.

24 In developing the pilot project, the department shall consider:

- 25 1. Higher rates of compensation for case aides hired under the pilot project;
- 26 2. Whether case aides hired under the pilot project would be covered by collective
27 bargaining agreements;
- 28 3. The development of appropriate internship programs for credit;
- 29 4. The use of signing bonuses;
- 30 5. The availability of flexible work hours; and
- 31 6. Other incentives as determined by the department for the recruitment and
32 employment of case aides.

33 **Sec. 2. Report. Resolved:** That, by November 6, 2024, the Department of Health
34 and Human Services shall submit a report to the joint standing committee of the Legislature
35 having jurisdiction over health and human services matters addressing the implementation
36 and effectiveness of the pilot project under section 1 and making recommendations
37 regarding further recruitment and employment efforts. The joint standing committee may
38 submit legislation to the 132nd Legislature in 2025 to continue or expand the pilot project.

39 **Emergency clause.** In view of the emergency cited in the preamble, this legislation
40 takes effect when approved.

1

SUMMARY

2 This resolve directs the Department of Health and Human Services to increase staffing
3 in the department's Office of Child and Family Services by developing and implementing
4 a pilot project in the office for the recruitment and employment of case aides in the child
5 protective services system for those areas of the child protective services system where
6 there is the greatest need for assistance, as determined by the department. The pilot project
7 must include a public recruitment campaign that targets retirees and other persons not in
8 the workforce. The department is directed to submit a report addressing the implementation
9 and effectiveness of the pilot project and making recommendations regarding further
10 recruitment and employment efforts to the joint standing committee of the Legislature
11 having jurisdiction over health and human services matters, which may submit legislation
12 to the 132nd Legislature in 2025 to continue or expand the pilot project.