

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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131st MAINE LEGISLATURE

SECOND REGULAR SESSION-2024

Legislative Document

No. 2255

H.P. 1446

House of Representatives, March 6, 2024

**Resolve, to Reestablish the Task Force on Accessibility to
Appropriate Communication Methods for Deaf and Hard-of-
hearing Patients**

(EMERGENCY)

Reported by Representative MEYER of Eliot for the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services pursuant to Resolve 2023, chapter 97, section 7.

Reference to the Committee on Health and Human Services suggested and ordered printed pursuant to Joint Rule 218.

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

ROBERT B. HUNT
Clerk

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,** this resolve reestablishes the Task Force on Accessibility to Appropriate
4 Communication Methods for Deaf and Hard-of-hearing Patients to study accessibility to
5 appropriate communication methods for deaf and hard-of-hearing patients in health care
6 settings and how that accessibility may be improved; and

7 **Whereas,** the study must be initiated before the expiration of the 90-day period in
8 order to provide sufficient time for the study to be completed and a report submitted in time
9 for submission to the next legislative session; and

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

14 **Sec. 1. Task force established. Resolved:** That the Task Force on Accessibility
15 to Appropriate Communication Methods for Deaf and Hard-of-hearing Patients, referred
16 to in this resolve as "the task force," is established.

17 **Sec. 2. Task force membership. Resolved:** That, notwithstanding Joint Rule 353,
18 the task force consists of 10 members appointed as follows:

19 1. One member of the Senate who serves on the Joint Standing Committee on Health
20 and Human Services, appointed by the President of the Senate;

21 2. One member of the House of Representatives who serves on the Joint Standing
22 Committee on Health and Human Services, appointed by the Speaker of the House;

23 3. One member of the public who is a person who is deaf or hard of hearing, appointed
24 by the Speaker of the House;

25 4. One member representing the Department of Health and Human Services, office of
26 aging and disability services, appointed by the Commissioner of Health and Human
27 Services;

28 5. One member representing Disability Rights Maine, appointed by the Commissioner
29 of Health and Human Services;

30 6. One member representing the Maine Educational Center for the Deaf and Hard of
31 Hearing and the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf, appointed by the Commissioner of
32 Health and Human Services;

33 7. One member who is a practicing American Sign Language interpreter who has
34 national certification as a core certification health care interpreter from the Certification
35 Commission for Healthcare Interpreters, appointed by the Commissioner of Health and
36 Human Services;

37 8. One member representing a hospital system with a language access plan that is
38 considered an appropriate model for hospitals, appointed by the Commissioner of Health
39 and Human Services;

40 9. One member representing the University of Maine System with national
41 certification as a core certification health care interpreter from the Certification

1 Commission for Healthcare Interpreters and experience in American Sign Language
2 medical interpreter training, appointed by the Commissioner of Health and Human
3 Services; and

4 10. One member representing the Department of Labor who works with compliance
5 issues regarding deaf and hard-of-hearing persons, appointed by the Commissioner of
6 Labor.

7 **Sec. 3. Chairs. Resolved:** That the Senate member is the Senate chair and the House
8 of Representatives member is the House chair of the task force.

9 **Sec. 4. Appointments; convening of task force. Resolved:** That all
10 appointments must be made no later than 30 days following the effective date of this
11 resolve. The appointing authorities shall notify the Executive Director of the Legislative
12 Council once all appointments have been completed. After appointment of all members,
13 the chairs shall call and convene the first meeting of the task force. If 30 days or more after
14 the effective date of this resolve a majority of but not all appointments have been made, the
15 chairs may request authority and the Legislative Council may grant authority for the task
16 force to meet and conduct its business.

17 **Sec. 5. Duties. Resolved:** That the task force shall study accessibility to appropriate
18 communication methods for deaf and hard-of-hearing patients in health care settings and
19 how that accessibility may be improved. The task force shall consider, but is not limited
20 to considering, the following:

- 21 1. The availability of American Sign Language interpreters in health care settings;
- 22 2. The availability of other communication technologies in health care settings, such
23 as video interpreters, automatically generated voice transcriptions and automatically
24 generated captions;
- 25 3. Staff education and training programs on overcoming barriers to health care
26 experienced by deaf and hard-of-hearing patients; and
- 27 4. Successful models for overcoming barriers to health care experienced by deaf and
28 hard-of-hearing patients.

29 **Sec. 6. Staff assistance. Resolved:** That the Legislative Council shall provide
30 necessary staffing services to the task force, except that Legislative Council staff support
31 is not authorized when the Legislature is in regular or special session.

32 **Sec. 7. Report. Resolved:** That, no later than November 6, 2024, the task force shall
33 submit a report that includes its findings and recommendations, including suggested
34 legislation, for presentation to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having
35 jurisdiction over health and human services matters. The joint standing committee of the
36 Legislature having jurisdiction over health and human services matters is authorized to
37 report out legislation related to the report to the 132nd Legislature in 2025.

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

SUMMARY

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This resolve is reported out by the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services pursuant to Resolve 2023, chapter 97. The resolve reestablishes the Task Force on Accessibility to Appropriate Communication Methods for Deaf and Hard-of-hearing Patients to study accessibility to appropriate communication methods for deaf and hard-of-hearing patients in health care settings and how that accessibility may be improved. The task force is required to submit a report and suggested legislation by November 6, 2024 to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over health and human services matters, which is authorized to report out legislation based on the report to the 132nd Legislature in 2025.