

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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132nd MAINE LEGISLATURE

SECOND REGULAR SESSION-2026

Legislative Document

No. 2144

S.P. 862

In Senate, January 7, 2026

**Resolve, to Establish the Working Group to Prioritize Wellness and
Mental Health Resources for Heritage Industries**

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 that reads "DAREK M. GRANT".

DAREK M. GRANT
Secretary of the Senate

Presented by Senator INGWERSEN of York.

Cosponsored by Representative STROUT of Harrington and
Senators: BLACK of Franklin, BRENNER of Cumberland, HICKMAN of Kennebec, MOORE
of Washington, RENY of Lincoln, TEPLER of Sagadahoc, Representatives: HEPLER of
Woolwich, PLUECKER of Warren.

1 **Preamble.** **Whereas**, struggles with mental health and wellness are common within
2 Maine's heritage industries, with many individuals and family members reporting high
3 levels of stress, burnout, depression and anxiety; and

4 **Whereas**, a July 2025 survey conducted by the University of Maine Cooperative
5 Extension and partners revealed 61% of respondents from the agriculture, aquaculture and
6 wild harvest fisheries industries identified the need for increased public education to raise
7 awareness and reduce stigma around mental health issues and access to industry-specific
8 and culturally competent supportive services; and

9 **Whereas**, Vermont, Colorado, Rhode Island, Massachusetts and other states have
10 recognized this critical need and implemented solutions; and

11 **Whereas**, Maine held its first Maine Land and Sea Farmer Wellness Forum in
12 September 2025, at which over 200 people were in attendance; and

13 **Whereas**, the 2021 suicide rate among persons of working age in the United States is
14 approximately 33% higher than it was 2 decades ago, with the agriculture, forestry, logging
15 and fishing industries remaining among occupation groups with higher suicide rates; and

16 **Whereas**, the purpose of the working group under this legislation is to convene a
17 group of leaders and experts in heritage industries and mental health and wellness care and
18 wellness programs to improve access to mental health and wellness and wellness care for
19 those involved in agriculture, fisheries, forestry and logging and their families; now,
20 therefore, be it

21 **Sec. 1. Working group established. Resolved:** That the Working Group to
22 Prioritize Wellness and Mental Health Resources for Heritage Industries, referred to in this
23 resolve as "the working group," is established.

24 **Sec. 2. Working group membership. Resolved:** That the working group
25 consists of 11 members as follows:

26 1. The Commissioner of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, or the
27 commissioner's designee, who serves as a cochair of the working group;

28 2. The Commissioner of Marine Resources, or the commissioner's designee, who
29 serves as a cochair of the working group;

30 3. The Commissioner of Health and Human Services, or the commissioner's designee,
31 who serves as a cochair of the working group;

32 4. One member representing the University of Maine Cooperative Extension,
33 appointed by the cochairs of the working group;

34 5. One member representing the State's agriculture industry, appointed by the cochairs
35 of the working group;

36 6. One member representing the State's fishing industry, appointed by the cochairs of
37 the working group;

38 7. One member representing the State's forestry or logging sector, appointed by the
39 cochairs of the working group;

1 8. One member representing a statewide mental health services provider organization,
2 appointed by the cochairs of the working group;

3 9. One member representing an occupational health and safety organization, appointed
4 by the cochairs of the working group;

5 10. One member with expertise in rural health or public health services, appointed by
6 the cochairs of the working group; and

7 11. One member representing a statewide organization that delivers community
8 services, appointed by the cochairs of the working group.

9 **Sec. 3. Duties. Resolved:** That the working group shall:

10 1. Review existing mental health and wellness resources available to individuals in the
11 State's heritage industries, including agriculture, fishing, forestry and logging;

12 2. Identify gaps in the provision of services and barriers to accessing existing
13 resources;

14 3. Examine successful models from other states and jurisdictions;

15 4. Develop recommendations for establishing sustainable funding mechanisms and
16 service delivery models; and

17 5. Explore opportunities for public education to reduce stigma around mental health
18 issues and increase awareness of mental health services.

19 **Sec. 4. Report. Resolved:** That, no later than December 1, 2026, the working group
20 shall submit a report that includes its findings and recommendations based on its review
21 under section 3, including suggested legislation, for presentation to the joint standing
22 committees of the Legislature having jurisdiction over agriculture, conservation and
23 forestry matters, marine resources matters and health and human services matters. The
24 joint standing committees may each submit legislation based on the findings and
25 recommendations in the report to the 133rd Legislature in 2027.

26 **SUMMARY**

27 This resolve creates the Working Group to Prioritize Wellness and Mental Health
28 Resources for Heritage Industries, which is directed to review existing mental health and
29 wellness resources available to individuals in Maine's heritage industries, identify gaps in
30 the provision of services and barriers to accessing existing resources, examine successful
31 models from other states and jurisdictions, develop recommendations for establishing
32 sustainable funding mechanisms and service delivery models and explore opportunities for
33 public education to reduce stigma around mental health issues and increase awareness of
34 mental health services. The resolve requires the working group to submit a report of its
35 findings and recommendations to the joint standing committees of the Legislature having
36 jurisdiction over agriculture, conservation and forestry matters, marine resources matters
37 and health and human services matters by December 1, 2026 and authorizes the joint
38 standing committees to each submit legislation to the 133rd Legislature in 2027.