

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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FIFTY-FIRST LEGISLATURE.

SENATE.

No. 3.

AN ACT TO PROVIDE STATE AID TO FREE HIGH SCHOOLS.

STATEMENT.

That our common schools need to be supplemented by those of a higher grade, with increased facilities and a wider range of studies, serving as a connecting link between the common schools and higher seminaries, must be apparent to all who have given attention to the subject. Academies have been our reliance for meeting this want in the past, and while they have done a noble work in this direction, thoughtful men are seriously questioning whether from the changed condition of the present times they have not passed the period of their usefulness. This changed condition consists principally in the general increase of wealth and population, the larger number who desire to avail themselves of increased advantages for education, and the growing feeling in favor of securing these advantages within their own limits. The high school is becoming more popular and general, as it is more in accordance with the genius of our institutions than are the old and more pretentious academies, which are local institutions, often denominational or sectarian, and involving an expense for board and tuition to those who attend them which virtually deprives the children of the poorer, and many of the middling classes, from participating in their benefits, and requiring a large proportion of those who do attend to leave their homes at a period when they most need the care and restraints of home influences. With the exception of the cities and larger towns, these increased facilities cannot be furnished without State aid, and in no case should this be granted except by general law, with the benefits free to all. Most, if not all, of the older institutions, and many of more recent date, have received State aid, and some to quite an extent. No class of applicants are more regular in their appearance at the Legislature, no claims are more strongly urged, and none more

readily command the sympathy of members; nor have they been wholly wanting in ability to form combinations to secure favorable legislation. State aid, to be effectual, should require that at least an equal amount should be raised by the towns. The treasurer may be authorized to issue to towns who shall pay into the State Treasury one thousand dollars or more, the Bonds of the State for twice the amount deposited, these Bonds to bear interest at seven per cent., which shall be paid to the towns annually for the purpose named. There are in the State thirteen towns with a population of five thousand and upwards, twenty of three thousand, eighty-five of fifteen hundred, and forty-three of twelve hundred and fifty. Suppose all the towns with a population of five thousand raise and deposit \$5,000 each, three-fourths of those with a population of three thousand should deposite \$3,000, one-half with fifteen hundred inhabitants \$1,500 each, one-fourth with twelve hundred and fifty, and twenty-five of the remaining towns with a population of less than twelve hundred and fifty should deposit \$1,250 each, we have the following results:

No. of towns aided.	Population of towns.	Money raised by towns.	Am't bonds issued.	Paid towns by State.	Monthly wg's paid teachers.	Months' schooling.	Total paid by State.
13	5,000	\$5,000	\$10,000	\$700	\$87½	8	\$9,100
20	3,000	3,000	6,000	420	70	6	8,400
85	1,500	1,500	3,000	210	70	3	17,850
43	1,250	1,250	2,500	175	58	3	7,525
25	less than 1,250	1,250	2,500	175	58	3	4,375

On this basis we have 186 towns, receiving from the State \$47,250 annually, but it must be borne in mind that one-half of this is for interest on the \$337,500 deposited in the State Treasury by the several towns, as follows:

Paid by State annually as above.....	\$47,250
Interest on deposits made by towns.....	\$23,625
Amount of State aid to schools.....	23,625
	\$47,250

Two objections against this plan, of an entirely opposite nature, may be very naturally anticipated.

1. The heavy expense to the State. But while it is to be hoped that the demand for State aid would not be less than supposed above, it is not probable that it would be one-half, and for some

years more than one-fourth of the amount; while under the old system the State has already given to educational institutions \$111,810 in cash and 436,180 acres of land, which, at the moderate estimate of 50 cents per acre amounts to \$218,090, or a total of \$329,900, or deducting \$72,500 paid to colleges and we have \$257,400 paid to forty-eight academies and high schools.

2. That so small results will be realized from a plan which only contemplates a single teacher for three, six or nine months to each term. But it may be said in reply, that it would inaugurate a system that must prove of great advantage to the educational interests of the State. Many towns will welcome three months of high school in addition to what they now possess, and will gladly avail themselves of the provisions of this act, who without this aid would make no attempts in this direction. There are academies now barely existing, and doing but little for the cause of education, but with buildings and apparatus already at hand, and with the aid from the State to which this arrangement would entitle them, might become flourishing free schools, with possibilities for good which can never be realized under the present system, and this can be done without abandoning or in any way prejudicing their present organization. There are thriving villages where public spirit and interest in the cause of education would be sufficiently strong to lead private individuals, on the failure of the town as a whole to engage in this work, to avail themselves of the provisions of this act to secure a high school for three or six months in the year. The general effect of such a plan would be stimulating and encouraging, and must tend to awaken a new interest in the cause of education throughout the State, and result in opening up their increased advantages to thousands who are now deprived of them. Therefore

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in Legislature assembled :

SECTION 1. When any city or town, or two or more towns uniting, any educational institution now incorporated, or private individuals, shall deposit in the State Treasury, a sum not less than one thousand nor more than five thousand dollars, for the purpose of establishing in such city, town, united towns or in the towns where such institution is located, or such private individuals reside, for a free high school in compliance with the terms and conditions prescribed in section four, the Treasurer shall issue to such cities or towns, State Bonds for twice the amount deposited,

bearing date July 1, 1872, having twenty years to run, with annual interest at seven per cent. These bonds to be registered and filed in the Treasury Office for safe keeping.

SECT. 2. On the first of July next following the deposit of money in the Treasury for the purpose named, the treasurer shall issue to the towns where schools are to be located, bonds as provided in section one, first cancelling all coupons that may have matured between the date of the bonds, and the time at which they shall be issued to the towns, and endorsing on the bonds thus issued, the date and amount of the deposit, also distinctly designating by whom such deposit was made, whether by the town educational institution, or by private individuals, annual interest on the bonds to be paid on or after the first day of January, to the order of the Superintending School Committee of the town where the school is located, accompanied by a certificate from such committee that the provisions of this act, in the establishment and maintenance of such school, have been complied with. But no part of the funds received from the State shall be applied to the erection or repairing of school-houses, or for any other purpose, than the payment of teachers, all other expenses to be borne by the town.

SECT. 3. At maturity the bonds shall be cancelled under the supervision of the Governor and Council, or Governor and State Auditor, and the several amounts which may have been deposited in the State Treasury for the benefit of these schools, shall be returned to the cities, towns, institution or private individuals who made these deposits, unless mutually agreed between the State and these several parties, the arrangement is to be continued, under this or some other form.

SECT. 4. These schools shall be free to all youth in the towns where located, and shall be under the supervision and control of the Superintending School Committee, who shall prescribe the necessary attainments for admission, and the rates of tuition to youth attending from other towns. Two or more towns may unite in establishing such a school, which shall be controlled by the joint action of the several town committees. The studies to be the usual academic course and the natural sciences.

STATE OF MAINE.

IN SENATE, January 5, 1872.

Presented by Mr. MORRIS of Cumberland, and on his motion laid on the table and ordered to be printed.

SAMUEL W. LANE, *Secretary.*