

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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SEVENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

HOUSE

NO. 1

House of Representatives, Jan. 11, 1917.

Ordered, That two thousand copies be printed and that the same be referred to the Committee on Legal Affairs.

Committee on Reference.

Presented by Mr. Gannett of Augusta.

STATE OF MAINE

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD ONE THOUSAND NINE
HUNDRED AND SEVENTEEN

AN ACT to provide aid for mothers with dependent children.

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine, as follows:

Section 1. Every city and town shall, subject to the provisions hereinafter contained, render suitable and adequate aid to any mother residing therein with a dependent child or children under the age of sixteen years, who needs and desires such aid to enable her to maintain herself and children in her home, and who is a fit person to bring up her children.

Sect. 2. This act shall apply to all mothers and their dependent children, whether or not they or any of them may

3 have a settlement in this state, who shall have resided in
4 the state not less than two years. No mother or any of her
5 children shall acquire a settlement or be in process of ac-
6 quiring settlement while receiving aid, nor be deemed a
7 pauper by receiving such aid.

Sect. 3. Such aid shall not exceed the value of five dol-
2 lars a week to a mother having but one child, under the age
3 of sixteen, and further payment to the value of two dollars
4 a week for each additional child.

Sect. 4. A State Board of Mothers Aid, hereinafter re-
2 ferred to as the "State Board," is hereby created, to serve
3 without compensation, and to consist of the members of
4 the State Board of Charities and Corrections, ex-officio, the
5 secretary of said State Board of Charities to be ex-officio
6 secretary of the "State Board," and to serve without addi-
7 tional compensation as such. The travelling and other nec-
8 essary expenses of the "State Board" and its secretary or
9 agents shall be defrayed from the appropriation provided
10 by section twelve of this act, and shall be audited by the
11 State Auditor and paid by the State Treasurer upon the
12 certificate of the State Auditor issued therefor as provided
13 by law. In each city, town or plantation there shall also
14 be a Municipal Board of Mothers Aid, hereinafter referred
15 to as the "Municipal Board," which shall consist of the
16 overseer, of board of overseers, of the poor, ex-officio, to
17 serve without additional compensation as such.

Sect. 5. Any such mother needing and desiring such aid

2 may apply therefor personally or by letter to the State
3 Board.. The Board shall thereupon cause the applicant to
4 fill out and sign an application blank, or shall fill out the
5 same from information furnished by the applicant and cause
6 it to be signed, in which shall be stated, first, the name of
7 the applicant and that of her husband, the time and place
8 of her marriage, and whether her husband is living or de-
9 ceased; second, the names and ages of her children, whether
10 they are attending any, and what schools, and if not, why
11 not; third, her present residence and address, the length of
12 time she has been a resident of this state, and where she
13 has resided therein; fourth, the nature and amount of any
14 property possessed by herself, her husband, if living, and
15 her children, and the extent and sources of her income and
16 theirs; fifth, the names and addresses of her near relatives
17 and those of her husband, and of one or more persons to
18 whom reference may be made for information; sixth, a
19 statement that the applicant will agree to employ all aid
20 received by her under this act solely for the support of her-
21 self and her children under the age of sixteen years, and
22 their proper upbringing in her home. If such applicant
23 knowingly, wilfully and with intent to deceive shall make
24 any false statement in said blank, she shall be punished by
25 a fine of not more than five hundred dollars, or by imprison-
26 ment not exceeding one year, or both.

Sect. 6. When such application has been made to the
2 State Board, it shall at once notify the Municipal Board

3 of the town in which the applicant resides, furnishing them
4 with a copy of the application. Said Municipal Board shall
5 thereupon make careful investigation by personally inter-
6 viewing the mother in her home, looking up her references,
7 and pursuing such other sources of information as are avail-
8 able, for the purpose of determining, first, the truth of the
9 statements contained in her application; second, whether she
10 is a fit person to bring up her children, and whether the
11 inmates and surroundings of her household are such as to
12 render it suitable for her children to reside at home; third,
13 whether the child or children of the applicant are attending
14 school, and if not, why not; fourth, whether under all the
15 circumstances, considering her own resources and the ability
16 of any member of her family to contribute to her support,
17 the possibility of receiving aid from other relatives, indi-
18 viduals, agencies, or child welfare organizations, and the
19 possibility of compelling contributions by any person under
20 legal obligation so to do,—such mother is in need of aid
21 under the provisions of this act, and if so, in what amount.

Sect. 7. Said Municipal Board shall thereupon file with
2 the State Board a written report embodying the results of
3 their investigation and their recommendations thereon, and
4 the State Board shall determine all matters in question, and
5 communicate in writing its decision to the Municipal Board.
6 If the applicant is held entitled to aid, the State Board shall
7 determine its character and amount, which may be less than,
8 but shall not exceed, the amount recommended by the Mu-

9 nicipal Board. The town shall thereupon, pursuant to such
10 decision, pay the same in money or its value to the appli-
11 cant, or to some person designated by the State Board upon
12 the recommendation of the Municipal Board, who shall
13 expend it for the purposes and in the manner set forth in
14 the decision. The State Board may revise its decision when-
15 ever it deems it necessary or equitable so to do, but shall
16 not increase the amount of aid previously awarded except
17 with the consent of the Municipal Board, nor decrease it
18 without giving said Board opportunity to be heard.

Sect. 8. The Municipal Board shall keep a record of all
2 applicants investigated, shall regularly visit, or cause a visit
3 to be made by some agent in their behalf, at the home of
4 each mother thus aided; shall see that her children are actu-
5 ally living with her in the home, observe the conditions of
6 the home and family, and make and keep a record of such
7 visits and any facts observed which bear upon the necessity
8 or advisability of the continuance of aid which is being
9 rendered, and report the same to the State Board regularly.

Sect. 9. In any case, when application for aid hereunder
2 is made by a mother who has a husband living, who is able
3 by means of his property or labor to contribute to her sup-
4 port and that of her children, but who wilfully neglects or
5 refuses so to do, or who has deserted her or her children,
6 it shall be the duty of the Municipal Board of the town
7 where the applicant resides to assist the mother in making
8 complaint to compel such husband to contribute to the sup-

9 port of his said wife and children, under the provisions of
10 sections 38 to 41 inclusive of chapter 120 of the Revised
11 Statutes, or in filing a petition under the provisions of sec-
12 tion 9 of chapter 66 of the Revised Statutes; and until such
13 proceedings have been begun, and are being prosecuted in
14 good faith to the satisfaction of the Municipal and State
15 Boards, and until, in cases of desertion, at least one year
16 has elapsed, no aid shall be given under the provisions of
17 this act.

Sect. 10. The State Board shall have general supervision
2 over the administration of the provisions of this act, and
3 shall prescribe appropriate forms for applications, reports
4 and other proceedings required by the act; said Board shall
5 keep a record of all cases reported to it hereunder and action
6 taken by it in relation to the same; and shall keep on file
7 all reports made to it by the Municipal Board; it shall see
8 that families aided hereunder are visited as herein required
9 and shall have access to any records of the Municipal Board
10 relating to any proceedings hereunder. In order to aid said
11 State Board in determining any questions presented to it
12 for decision by the Municipal Board under the provisions
13 of this act, it may, in addition to their reports, make further
14 investigation in such manner as it may deem best. It shall
15 embody a statement concerning the work done hereunder
16 in the annual report of the State Board of Charities and
17 Corrections.

Sect. 11. Any city or town rendering aid under the pro-

2 visions of this act, shall be reimbursed by the state for one-
3 half of the amount given after approval by the State Board
4 and State Auditor of the bills. If the mother so aided has
5 no settlement, the city or town shall be reimbursed for the
6 total amount of the aid given after approval of the bill as
7 aforesaid. If the mother so aided has a lawful settlement
8 in another city or town, the amount of such aid rendered
9 may be recovered by the city or town giving it in an action
10 against the city or town liable therefor, provided the city
11 or town so liable was notified in accordance with the require-
12 ments of Section 33 of Chapter 29 of the Revised Statutes,
13 or against the kindred of the mother and children so aided
14 in the manner provided by said Section 33.

Sect. 12. For the purpose of reimbursing the cities or
2 towns as provided in the foregoing section, and paying the
3 expenses of the State Board and the services and expenses
4 of its agents hereunder, there is hereby appropriated from
5 the state treasury the sum of \$25,000 annually for the first
6 two years during which this act is in operation.

Sect. 13. All acts and parts of acts inconsistent herewith
are hereby repealed.