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<p style="text-align:center">JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS</p>
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**Review of the State Board of Education
under the Government Evaluation Act**

The Government Evaluation Act

The Government Evaluation Act (“Act”) provides for a system of periodic review of the efficacy and performance of state government agencies. The review of an agency’s finances and programs must include a review of agency management and organization, program delivery, goals and objectives, statutory mandates and fiscal accountability (3 MRSA § 951 et seq). The law was enacted in the 117th Legislature to replace the old Government Audit and Program Review Program and substituted a legislative audit of each agency on a rotating basis with an agency self assessment. The first reviews under the Act will be completed at the end of the 118th Legislature.

The keystone to the Act is the agency program evaluation report which consists of a number of components required by the statute. Essentially, the report is an agency self-assessment which the committee of jurisdiction uses as a starting point for its evaluation of the agency’s effectiveness, efficiency and performance. The components that must be included in the report are: the agency’s enabling state and federal legislation; program descriptions; organizational structure, position count and job classifications; compliance with federal and state health and safety laws; ten-year financial summaries; regulatory agenda; coordinated efforts with other state agencies; constituencies served by the agency; alternative delivery systems; and emerging issues for the agency.

Review Process

Pursuant to the requirements of the Act, the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs notified the State Board of Education of its intent to review the board shortly after the end of the 118th Legislature’s First Regular and First Special Sessions. The State Board of Education submitted its program evaluation report on January 21, 1998. The Committee held two meetings to conduct their review of the State Board of Education under the Act: January 21, 1998 and March 11, 1998. At these meetings, the Committee reviewed enabling legislation, the organizational structure of the Board, the Board’s standing committees, a ten-year financial summary, and emerging issues for the Board.

Findings of Review

mission and continues to focus its efforts to promote that mission. The Board continues to play a significant role in the important governance and educational policy initiatives in the State. The lay perspective that the Board brings to statewide educational policy issues has served to enhance the effectiveness of both near-term and long-range educational policymaking. Further detailed information about the State Board of Education can be found in the Board's Program Evaluation Report.

The Committee also recognizes that the lack of adequate resources and limited administrative and support staff raised by the State Board of Education may present significant "performance barriers" for the Board to overcome. Since the downsizing of state agencies following the Productivity Realization Task Force Review, the State Board of Education has become increasingly reliant upon the Department of Education for staffing assistance. As the Board has been delegated an increasing number of study committees and other assignments by the Legislature, the autonomy and effectiveness of the Board's educational policymaking efforts may be diminished due to this dependence on the Department of Education for administrative and support staff assistance.

Recommendations

The Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs commends the State Board of Education for submitting a comprehensive Program Evaluation Report. The Committee also applauds the commitment of the Members of the State Board of Education, who continue to welcome the opportunity to respond to educational policy initiatives assigned by the Legislature.

To prevent the lack of adequate resources from diminishing the Board's performance, the Committee recognizes the need for more resources to be directed to the Board. Towards this end, the Committee recommends that the Legislature and the Board work together to see to it that when assignments are handed down from the Legislature, the Board will receive adequate staffing assistance in order to realistically and sufficiently complete those assignments. To ensure that staffing assistance is provided for these assignments, the Legislature should appropriate funds to the Board for "contracted services."

The Committee further recommends that legislation be introduced to the 119th Legislature that would establish the State Board of Education as a separate entity from the Department of Education with respect to the reporting requirements of the Government Evaluation Act. This could be done by amending 3 MRSA, chapter 35, §959, sub-§1, ¶ E, to include the Board in the guidelines for scheduling reviews. The Board's review should continue to be scheduled at the same time as the review of the Department of Education. The Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs looks forward to working with the Board on an ongoing basis, including working together on any proposed legislation that may be introduced in the 119th Legislature.