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Legislative Document

No. 1774

H.P. 1223

House of Representatives, January 5, 2018

An Act To Reduce Child Poverty by Leveraging Investments in Families for Tomorrow

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 cursive script that reads "R B. Hunt".

ROBERT B. HUNT
Clerk

Presented by Speaker GIDEON of Freeport.
Cosponsored by Senator VOLK of Cumberland and
Representatives: DENNO of Cumberland, HANDY of Lewiston, HUBBELL of Bar Harbor,
HYMANSON of York, MALABY of Hancock, STEWART of Presque Isle, TALBOT ROSS
of Portland, Senator: VITELLI of Sagadahoc.

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

2 **Sec. 1. 22 MRSA §3104, sub-§17** is enacted to read:

3 **17. Employment and training services.** The department shall establish a program
4 pursuant to this subsection to be known as the Food Supplement Employment and
5 Training Program to help program participants develop skills enabling them to enter and
6 maintain self-supporting and family-supporting employment or to enter a program that
7 has a career pathway offering a clear sequence of activities leading to self-supporting and
8 family-supporting employment. To the maximum extent feasible, the department shall
9 seek and use for the purposes of the program eligible state, local and philanthropic
10 resources that qualify for federal 50% reimbursement for employment and training
11 services and the support services necessary to participate in the program.

12 To implement the program, the department shall establish a procedure by which an
13 educational institution or community-based organization may apply for a partnership
14 agreement with the department to provide education, training or support services to food
15 supplement benefit recipients seeking these services. The department shall establish
16 partnership agreements with qualified educational institutions or community-based
17 organizations that demonstrate they can provide education, training and support services
18 that:

19 A. Are eligible for reimbursement under employment and training programs of the
20 federal supplemental nutrition assistance program;

21 B. Lead to or result in a program participant's receiving a degree or industry-
22 recognized certificate or similar credential or are part of a career pathway offering a
23 clear sequence of educational course work or credentials designed to accelerate the
24 educational and career advancement of program participants to the extent practicable,
25 including preparing program participants to enter or advance to a full range of
26 postsecondary educational options;

27 C. Include personalized professional guidance, support and navigation services to
28 program participants to promote program completion and student success;

29 D. Meet the needs of program participants for support services, including
30 transportation and child care, necessary to participate in the program. The qualified
31 entity must have a fair and uniform system for delivering these services; and

32 E. Result in sustainable employment for program participants.

33 The department shall develop a system for tracking program participants' eligibility,
34 enrollment, continued participation and program outcomes. The department may use
35 federal funds received from the federal supplemental nutrition assistance program to
36 carry out its duties under this subsection.

37 **Sec. 2. 22 MRSA §3790-A** is enacted to read:

38 **§3790-A. Working Families Parents as Scholars Program**

39 **1. Program established.** The department shall establish a student financial aid
40 program based on need to be known as the Working Families Parents as Scholars

1 Program, referred to in this section as "the program," for a parent or caretaker relative of
2 a minor child who does not qualify for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families cash
3 assistance pursuant to chapter 1053-B and is matriculating in an education or training
4 program, or is enrolled in a program providing remedial services necessary for the parent
5 or caretaker relative to matriculate, that results in a postsecondary undergraduate 2-year
6 or 4-year degree or high-value, industry-recognized certificate or similar credential.

7 Enrollment in the program may not exceed the difference between the enrollment under
8 section 3790 and the enrollment limit established under section 3790, subsection 1.

9 The program must be supported with funds provided under the Temporary Assistance for
10 Needy Families block grant that are available under Title IV-A of the United States
11 Social Security Act or funds transferred from that block grant to the social services block
12 grant authorized under Title XX of the United States Social Security Act or the child care
13 and development block grant authorized under the federal Child Care and Development
14 Block Grant Act of 1990 and Section 418 of the United States Social Security Act.

15 **2. Eligibility criteria.** To the extent that enrollment limits under subsection 1
16 permit, enrollment or continued participation in the program must be granted if the
17 applicant or participant:

18 A. Does not already have a marketable bachelor's degree;

19 B. Has the aptitude to successfully complete the proposed education or training
20 program as determined by the educational institution or training provider;

21 C. Is pursuing a degree, industry-recognized certificate or similar credential in a field
22 or occupation that has at least an average job outlook as identified by the Center for
23 Workforce Research and Information within the Department of Labor. For fields or
24 occupations for which the job outlook is lower than average, the commissioner or the
25 commissioner's designee must approve the applicant's or participant's education plan;

26 D. Is making satisfactory progress in the education or training program as
27 determined by the educational institution or training provider; and

28 E. Has income that is equal to or below 185% of the nonfarm income official poverty
29 line for a family of the size involved as defined by the federal Office of Management
30 and Budget and revised annually in accordance with the United States Omnibus
31 Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981, Section 673, Subsection 2.

32 **3. Program assistance.** A program participant must be provided with a package of
33 student aid that includes all support services necessary for participation in the program
34 that are at least equivalent to those provided under chapter 1054-A.

35 **4. Work study.** The department shall provide funds described under subsection 1 to
36 create or expand work-study opportunities for program participants when necessary to
37 meet the goals of promoting program retention, student persistence and family economic
38 stability and when sufficient federal work-study funds under Title IV of the federal
39 Higher Education Act of 1965 are not available to the participant.

40 **5. Campus-based student support and navigation.** The department shall provide
41 annually up to \$1,000,000 in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families funds described

1 in subsection 1 to educational institutions to establish or supplement personalized
2 professional guidance, support and navigation services provided directly to program
3 participants to promote program completion and student success.

4 **6. Protection from loss of income.** To the extent permitted by federal law, aid
5 received under this section must be disregarded as income and excluded as a resource or
6 asset for the purposes of any state, federal, tribal or municipal assistance program.

7 **7. Rules.** The department shall adopt rules to implement this section. Rules adopted
8 pursuant to this subsection are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375,
9 subchapter 2-A.

10 SUMMARY

11 This bill establishes 2 programs intended to strengthen the financial stability of low-
12 income families with children and individuals through increased access to education and
13 training services and the support services needed to participate.

14 The first program is a food supplement employment and training program that
15 requires partnership agreements to be made between the Department of Health and
16 Human Services and 3rd-party educational institutions or community-based organizations
17 that meet certain standards to provide education, training and support services to eligible
18 adults who are food supplement benefit recipients. This program is supported with
19 federal supplemental nutrition assistance program funds.

20 The 2nd program is a companion to the current Parents as Scholars Program and is
21 available to persons with minor children who do not qualify for cash assistance under the
22 Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, who have incomes at or below 185%
23 of the federal poverty level and who are pursuing a postsecondary degree, industry-
24 recognized certificate or similar credential in a field or occupation that has at least an
25 average job outlook as identified by the Department of Labor. This program is funded
26 with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families block grant funds.