

STATE OF MAINE

—
IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD
TWO THOUSAND AND FIFTEEN

—
H.P. 87 - L.D. 129

An Act To Provide Options to Schools for Making Up School Days

Emergency preamble. Whereas, acts and resolves of the Legislature do not become effective until 90 days after adjournment unless enacted as emergencies; and

Whereas, last winter's weather conditions included blizzards and snowstorms that set records for the amount of snowfall in many regions of the State, which caused the cancellation of a significant number of school days in many school administrative units due to dangerous road and travel conditions; and

Whereas, Department of Education Rule Chapter 125 provides that a school board may reschedule cancelled school days by conducting classes on the weekend, rescheduling or shortening scheduled vacation periods or postponing the scheduled closing date of the school year; and

Whereas, providing school administrative units with the additional option of adding make-up instructional time during existing school days would provide school boards with greater flexibility in determining how to meet the minimum school year calendar requirements; and

Whereas, because Rule Chapter 125 is a major substantive rule, changes to the rule require legislative review before the changes may be made; and

Whereas, the Legislature has the authority to direct the Department of Education to amend its rule to reflect legislative policy determinations; and

Whereas, the Department of Education and school boards need statutory and rule revisions for the acceptable methods established for rescheduling cancelled school days in order for school administrative units to have another option to meet the minimum school year calendar requirements for this school year; and

Whereas, in the judgment of the Legislature, these facts create an emergency within the meaning of the Constitution of Maine and require the following legislation as

immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety; now, therefore,

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

Sec. 1. 20-A MRSA §4801, sub-§1, ¶F is enacted to read:

F. A school administrative unit operating under a plan approved by the commissioner may provide for a one-hour extension of the school day for up to 25 days in a school year. Notwithstanding the required number of school days under this subsection, 5 one-hour extensions may be counted as one additional school day. A school administrative unit may, with the approval of the commissioner pursuant to rules adopted in accordance with this subsection, implement extended days pursuant to this paragraph only for the purpose of making up school days missed due to weather or emergency closures.

Sec. 2. Amendment of rule. The Department of Education shall amend portions of Section 6 of its Rule Chapter 125: Basic Approval Standards: Public Schools and School Administrative Units to provide that the acceptable methods of rescheduling school days cancelled due to weather or emergency closures may include a one-hour extension of the school day for up to 25 days in a school year and to provide that 5 one-hour extensions may be counted as one additional school day.

Sec. 3. Expedited amendment process. Notwithstanding the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 5, chapter 375, subchapters 2 and 2-A and any other law, the Department of Education shall adopt the amendments to Section 6 of its Rule Chapter 125: Basic Approval Standards: Public Schools and School Administrative Units as provided in section 2 of this Act. The department shall file the amended rule with the Secretary of State as a final adopted rule within 7 business days of the effective date of this Act and the rule is effective upon filing. Rules adopted pursuant to this section are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A. Beginning July 1, 2015, any changes to Rule Chapter 125 are major substantive rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

Emergency clause. In view of the emergency cited in the preamble, this legislation takes effect when approved.