

PLEASE NOTE: Legislative Information **cannot** perform research, provide legal advice, or interpret Maine law. For legal assistance, please contact a qualified attorney.

## **An Act To Establish the Hearing Assistance Program for Low-income Persons Who Are Elderly or Disabled**

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

**Sec. 1. 26 MRSA §1419-C** is enacted to read:

### **§ 1419-C. Hearing assistance program**

**1. Program established.** There is established within the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services the hearing assistance program.

**2. Definition.** As used in this section, unless the context otherwise indicates, the following terms have the following meanings.

A. "Cap-tel" means a captioned telephone telecommunications relay service.

B. "Hearing assistance program" means a program of hearing assistance consisting of a hearing aid purchase assistance program and a cap-tel subsidy program.

**3. Funding.** The program is funded by the state universal service fund, as provided in Title 35-A, section 7104, subsection 8.

**4. Eligibility.** The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services shall adopt rules to establish eligibility for the program for low-income persons who are deaf or hard-of-hearing and elderly or disabled. Rules adopted pursuant to this subsection are routine technical rules as defined by Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

**5. Grants.** The program must provide to eligible persons grants to enable them to purchase or assist them in purchasing a hearing aid or hearing aids and subsidies to assist with payment for cap-tel service.

**Sec. 2. 35-A MRSA §7104, sub-§8** is enacted to read:

**8. Hearing assistance program.** The commission shall work with the Department of Labor to fund within the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services the hearing assistance program, referred to in this subsection as "the program." The program is funded from the state universal service fund and provides funds for the purchase of hearing aids through grants to eligible low-income persons who are deaf or hard-of-hearing and elderly or disabled and subsidies for cap-tel service, as provided for in Title 26, section 1419-C. The commission shall provide public information regarding the availability of funds through the program for the purchase of hearing aids and subsidies for cap-tel service.

## **SUMMARY**

This bill establishes the hearing assistance program within the Department of Labor, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services to provide grants to low-income persons who are deaf or hard-of-hearing and elderly or disabled for the purchase of hearing aids and subsidies for cap-tel service. The program is funded through the state universal service fund, which is administered by the Public Utilities Commission.