



132nd MAINE LEGISLATURE

FIRST REGULAR SESSION-2025

Legislative Document

No. 681

S.P. 296

In Senate, February 25, 2025

An Act Regarding Public Higher Education Funding in the State

Received by the Secretary of the Senate on February 20, 2025. Referred to the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs pursuant to Joint Rule 308.2 and ordered printed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D M Grant'.

DAREK M. GRANT
Secretary of the Senate

Presented by Senator GROHOSKI of Hancock.
Cosponsored by Representative FOSTER of Dexter and
Senators: President DAUGHTRY of Cumberland, LIBBY of Cumberland, RAFFERTY of
York, RENY of Lincoln, Representatives: BISHOP of Bucksport, FAULKINGHAM of Winter
Harbor, MILLIKEN of Blue Hill, STOVER of Boothbay.

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

2 **Sec. 1. 20-A MRSA §10018** is enacted to read:

3 **§10018. Mandated legislative appropriations for Maine Maritime Academy**

4 Beginning in fiscal year 2025-26 and each fiscal year thereafter, the Legislature shall
5 increase the percentage of the Maine Maritime Academy's total state appropriation as a
6 share of its total operating costs by 5% until the percentage of the total state appropriation
7 as a share of the Maine Maritime Academy's total operating costs equals at least the lesser
8 of:

9 **1. University of Maine System appropriations.** The percentage of the University of
10 Maine System's total state appropriation as a share of its total operating costs; and

11 **2. Maine Community College System appropriations.** The percentage of the Maine
12 Community College System's total state appropriation as a share of its total operating costs.

13 Beginning in 2025, the University of Maine System, the Maine Community College
14 System and the Maine Maritime Academy shall each submit to the Governor and to the
15 Legislature a report by December 1st annually that contains its most recent total operating
16 costs.

17 **Sec. 2. Commission established.** The Commission to Study the Funding of Public
18 Institutions of Higher Education, referred to in this section as "the commission," is
19 established.

20 1. Notwithstanding Joint Rule 353, the commission consists of 15 members, including:

21 A. Two members of the Senate, appointed by the President of the Senate, who serve
22 on the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, including one
23 member of the party holding the largest number of seats in the Legislature and one
24 member of the party holding the 2nd largest number of seats in the Legislature;

25 B. Three members of the House of Representatives, appointed by the Speaker of the
26 House, who serve on the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,
27 including 2 members of the party holding the largest number of seats in the Legislature
28 and one member of the party holding the 2nd largest number of seats in the Legislature;

29 C. One member with expertise in higher education policy issues representing a
30 statewide education policy research institute, appointed by the President of the Senate;

31 D. One member representing the certification and higher education committee of the
32 State Board of Education, appointed by the President of the Senate;

33 E. One member who is a representative of a union representing the faculty of the Maine
34 Community College System, appointed by the President of the Senate;

35 F. One member who is a representative of a union representing the faculty of the
36 University of Maine System, appointed by the Speaker of the House;

37 G. One member who is a representative of a union representing the faculty of the
38 Maine Maritime Academy, appointed by the Speaker of the House;

39 H. One member who is currently enrolled as a student at a public college or university
40 in the State, appointed by the Speaker of the House;

- 1 I. The Chancellor of the University of Maine System or the chancellor's designee;
- 2 J. The President of the Maine Community College System or the president's designee;
- 3 K. The President of the Maine Maritime Academy or the president's designee; and
- 4 L. The Commissioner of Education or the commissioner's designee.

5 In appointing members of the commission, the appointing authorities shall give
6 consideration to race, gender, socioeconomic diversity and geographic diversity.

7 2. The first-named Senate member is the Senate chair and the first-named House of
8 Representatives member is the House chair of the commission.

9 3. All appointments must be made no later than 30 days following the effective date of
10 this Act. The appointing authorities shall notify the Executive Director of the Legislative
11 Council once all appointments have been completed. After appointment of all members,
12 the chairs shall call and convene the first meeting of the commission. If 30 days or more
13 after the effective date of this Act a majority of but not all appointments have been made,
14 the chairs may request authority and the Legislative Council may grant authority for the
15 commission to meet and conduct its business.

16 4. The commission shall review all related laws and rules addressing the State's public
17 policy on higher education, including but not limited to the Maine Revised Statutes, Title
18 20-A, section 10902, and the methods and mechanisms by which public higher education
19 institutions in the State are funded and make recommendations for potential legislative
20 changes.

21 In conducting its review, the commission shall analyze present and future goals, including
22 but not limited to expanding access to affordable high-quality higher education to help
23 students achieve postsecondary success in the 21st century. The commission shall also
24 analyze present and past funding methods and mechanisms used in the State to determine
25 the State's portion of funding for the University of Maine System, the Maine Community
26 College System and the Maine Maritime Academy, as well as funding mechanisms used
27 by other states to fund public higher education.

28 To assist the commission in carrying out its review, the Department of Education, the
29 University of Maine System, the Maine Community College System and the Maine
30 Maritime Academy each shall provide to the commission any data and information the
31 commission requests and considers relevant to its work.

32 At the discretion of the chairs, the commission may seek input from students, faculty and
33 staff in the State's public institutions of higher education, groups that have an interest in the
34 State's public institutions of higher education and other stakeholders.

35 5. The Legislative Council shall provide necessary staffing services to the commission,
36 except that Legislative Council staff support is not authorized when the Legislature is in
37 regular or special session.

38 6. No later than December 3, 2025, the commission shall submit a report that includes
39 its findings and recommendations, including suggested legislation, to the Joint Standing
40 Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. The joint standing committee may report
41 out a bill related to the report to the Second Regular Session of the 132nd Legislature.

1 **SUMMARY**

2 This bill provides that, beginning in fiscal year 2025-26 and each fiscal year thereafter,
3 the Legislature must increase the percentage of the Maine Maritime Academy's total state
4 appropriation as a share of its total operating costs by 5% until the percentage of the Maine
5 Maritime Academy's total state appropriation as a share of the academy's total operating
6 costs equals at least the lesser of the percentages of the University of Maine System's and
7 the Maine Community College System's total state appropriation as a share of each
8 respective system's total operating costs.

9 The bill also establishes the Commission to Study the Funding of Public Institutions of
10 Higher Education to review the State's laws and rules related to higher education, analyze
11 past, present and alternative methods and mechanisms of funding public higher education
12 and analyze present and future goals, including expanding access to affordable higher
13 education. The commission is required to submit a report based on its findings to the Joint
14 Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs by December 3, 2025.