

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 Address the Documented Educational and Rehabilitation Needs of Persons Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired

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

Sec. 1. Appropriations and allocations. The following appropriations and allocations are made.

**LABOR, DEPARTMENT OF
Blind and Visually Impaired - Division for
the 0126**

Initiative: Provides funding for 2 Certified Teacher of the Visually Impaired positions and related costs including support staff, travel and office equipment, both to be competitively contracted by the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired, currently contracted through Catholic Charities of Maine, in order to address the documented educational needs of students who are blind or visually impaired; to satisfy disability-specific instructional requirements mandated by the federal Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, known as the expanded core curriculum, a curriculum of blindness-specific instruction pertinent to transition-age students who are blind or visually impaired; and to eliminate the existing waiting list for appropriate special education services for students who are blind or visually impaired.

GENERAL FUND	2011-12	2012-13
All Other	\$140,000	\$145,600
GENERAL FUND TOTAL	\$140,000	\$145,600

**Blind and Visually Impaired - Division for
the 0126**

Initiative: Provides funding for one full-time Certified Vision Rehabilitation Therapist position in Rockland and 2 half-time Certified Vision Rehabilitation Therapist positions in Bangor and Houlton and related costs including support staff, travel and office equipment, all to be competitively contracted by the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired, currently contracted through The Iris Network, in order to meet the vocational rehabilitation and independent living needs of increasing numbers of adults with vision loss; to satisfy disability-specific instructional requirements mandated by the federal Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, known as the

expanded core curriculum, a curriculum of blindness-specific instruction pertinent to transition-age students who are blind or visually impaired; and to meet established standards for client-therapist ratios.

GENERAL FUND	2011-12	2012-13
All Other	\$140,000	\$145,600
GENERAL FUND TOTAL	\$140,000	\$145,600

Blind and Visually Impaired - Division for the 0126

Initiative: Provides funding to establish one Program Design and Evaluation position with The Iris Network, responsible for designing and evaluating a comprehensive statewide system of center-based and community-based programs and services in order to meet the vocational rehabilitation and independent living needs of the rapidly expanding number of adults dealing with vision loss due both to aging and to age-related eye diseases that cause vision loss.

GENERAL FUND	2011-12	2012-13
All Other	\$90,000	\$93,600
GENERAL FUND TOTAL	\$90,000	\$93,600

Blind and Visually Impaired - Division for the 0126

Initiative: Provides funding for one Orientation and Mobility Instructor for the Blind position and one Blindness Rehabilitation Specialist position and related costs within the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired in order to address the documented educational needs of students who are blind or visually impaired; to satisfy disability-specific instructional requirements mandated by the federal Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, known as the expanded core curriculum, a curriculum of blindness-specific instruction pertinent to transition-age students who are blind or visually impaired; to meet the vocational rehabilitation and independent living needs of increasing numbers of adults with vision loss; and to meet established standards for student-teacher ratios.

GENERAL FUND	2011-12	2012-13
POSITIONS - LEGISLATIVE COUNT	2.000	2.000
Personal Services	\$83,678	\$117,187
All Other	\$15,000	\$10,000
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GENERAL FUND TOTAL	\$98,678	\$127,187
LABOR, DEPARTMENT OF		
DEPARTMENT TOTALS	2011-12	2012-13
GENERAL FUND	\$468,678	\$511,987
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DEPARTMENT TOTAL - ALL FUNDS	\$468,678	\$511,987

SUMMARY

This bill addresses the documented educational and rehabilitation needs of blind students and adults by funding approximately 50% of the professional staff shortage identified by both:

1. The report of the stakeholder working group established to review the current and future needs of blind or visually impaired individuals established pursuant to Resolve 2009, chapter 39; and
2. The recommendations of the Department of Education's corrective action plan work group in regard to Disability Rights Center v. Maine Department of Education dated July 28, 2010.

The bill addresses the immediate crisis in staff shortages identified by both of the above-referenced reports, thereby avoiding a failure by this State to comply with federally mandated levels of special education services for Maine students who are blind or visually impaired.

The bill meets the rapidly expanding need for vision rehabilitation and independent living services for adults dealing with vision loss due to both the general aging of the population and age-related eye diseases that cause vision loss.

The bill provides funding for the following positions:

1. Two Certified Teacher of the Visually Impaired positions, to be competitively contracted by the Department of Labor, Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired, currently contracted through Catholic Charities of Maine;
2. One Orientation and Mobility Instructor for the Blind position and one Blindness Rehabilitation Specialist position, both to be employed by the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired;
3. One full-time and 2 half-time Certified Vision Rehabilitation Therapist positions, to be competitively contracted by the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired, currently contracted through The Iris Network; and
4. One Director of Program Design and Evaluation position to be competitively contracted by the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired.