

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 Ensure That Charter Schools Are Funded by the State

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

Sec. 1. 20-A MRSA §2405, sub-§10 is enacted to read:

10. Moratorium on authorization of public charter schools. Notwithstanding any other provisions of this chapter, the commission, a local school board or a collaborative of local school boards may not authorize a public charter school under the provisions of this chapter and any public charter school that has not commenced operations on the effective date of this subsection may not commence operations until this subsection is repealed. This subsection may not be repealed until the State provides the required 55% state share of the total cost of funding public education from kindergarten to grade 12 as set forth in section 15671, subsection 1.

Sec. 2. 20-A MRSA §2412, sub-§6, ¶C, as amended by PL 2011, c. 570, §16, is further amended to read:

C. Teachers at a public charter school authorized by the commission may choose to bargain collectively in accordance with this paragraph.

(1) Teachers who are employees of the public charter school have the same rights as other teachers in public education to organize and bargain collectively. ~~Bargaining units at the public charter school must be separate from other bargaining units, such as a district bargaining unit. Staff at noncharter public schools converting to public charter schools have a right to employment benefits as stated in applicable collective bargaining agreements or they may vote to be represented in alternative ways.~~

(3) Teachers who are employees of the public charter school may not be required to be members of ~~any~~ existing collective bargaining agreement between a school administrative unit and its employees. A public charter school may not interfere with civil service laws or other applicable rules protecting the rights of employees to organize and be free from discrimination.

Sec. 3. 20-A MRSA §2412, sub-§6, ¶D is enacted to read:

D. Teachers at a public charter school authorized by a local school board or a collaborative of local school boards may choose to bargain collectively in accordance with this paragraph.

(1) Teachers who are employees of a start-up public charter school have the same rights as other teachers in public education to organize and bargain collectively.

(2) Teachers who are employees of a noncharter public school converting to a public charter school remain public employees for all purposes, unless a majority of teachers vote to be represented in alternative ways.

(3) Teachers who are employees of a start-up public charter school or a noncharter public school converting to a public charter school may collectively bargain as a separate bargaining unit or as part of an existing school administrative unit collective bargaining unit as determined by a majority of the teachers employed by the start-up public charter school or noncharter public school converting to a public charter school.

SUMMARY

This bill establishes a moratorium on the authorization of new public charter schools until the State provides at least 55% of the total cost of funding public education from kindergarten to grade 12 as set out in the Essential Programs and Services Funding Act.

The bill amends the current collective bargaining provisions in the public charter school laws to clarify that teachers employed by a public charter school authorized by the Maine Charter School Commission retain the choice of whether or not to establish a collective bargaining unit and whether or not to become a member of a collective bargaining unit established for the public charter school.

The bill also provides that teachers employed by a public charter school authorized by a local school board or a collaborative of local school boards may choose to bargain collectively as follows.

1. Teachers who are employees of a start-up public charter school have the same rights as other teachers in public education to organize and bargain collectively.

2. Teachers who are employees of a noncharter public school converting to a public charter school remain public employees for all purposes, unless a majority of teachers employed by the conversion public charter school vote to be represented in alternative ways.

3. Teachers who are employees of a start-up public charter school or a noncharter public school converting to a public charter school may collectively bargain as a separate bargaining unit or as part of an existing school administrative unit collective bargaining unit as determined by a majority of the teachers employed by the start-up public charter school or noncharter public school converting to a public charter school.