

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 Increase Access to Quality Child Care

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

**Sec. 1. 22 MRSA §3737, sub-§3**, as amended by PL 2001, c. 394, §1, is further amended to read:

**3. Quality differential.** To the extent permitted by federal law, the department shall pay a differential rate for child care services that meet or that make substantial progress toward meeting nationally recognized quality standards, such as those standards required by the Head Start program or required for accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, and shall do so from the Child Care Development Fund 25% Quality Set-aside funds or by other acceptable federal practices. The department shall adopt rules to implement this subsection. Rules adopted pursuant to this subsection are routine technical rules as defined by Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter H-A2-A. ~~The rules must limit payment of the differential for substantial progress to a period of one year. The rules must provide differential rates for substantial progress and must define substantial progress as:~~

The rules must establish a 4-step child care quality rating system and must provide the following schedule of payments:

- ~~A. Having submitted program descriptions and awaiting a scheduled visit from an accrediting body approved by the department; or~~
- ~~B. For family child care, having submitted a portfolio for a child development associate and awaiting a scheduled observation.~~
- C. A 5% quality differential rate for step 2 child care services;
- D. A 10% quality differential rate for step 3 child care services; and
- E. A 25% quality differential rate for step 4 child care services.

Nothing in this subsection requires the department to pay a quality differential rate for child care services provided through the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families block grant.

### SUMMARY

This bill requires the Department of Health and Human Services to establish a 4-step child care quality rating system and provide quality differential payments of 5%, 10% and 25% for the 3 highest steps. It removes language relating to requirements in the department rules regarding substantial progress toward meeting quality ratings. It provides that the department is not required to pay a quality differential rate for child care services provided through the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families block grant.