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Resolve, To Establish the Task Force on Independence from Public Assistance

Emergency preamble. Whereas, acts and resolves of the Legislature do not become effective until 90 days after adjournment unless enacted as emergencies; and

Whereas, the Task Force on Independence from Public Assistance is required to perform its work in a thorough and deliberate manner so that legislation may be drafted to encourage independence from public assistance for consideration in the Second Regular Session of the 127th Legislature; and

Whereas, the study must be initiated before the 90-day period expires in order that the study may be completed and a report submitted in time for submission to the next legislative session; and

Whereas, in the judgment of the Legislature, these facts create an emergency within the meaning of the Constitution of Maine and require the following legislation as immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety; now, therefore, be it

Sec. 1 Task Force on Independence from Public Assistance established. Resolved: That the Task Force on Independence from Public Assistance, referred to in this resolve as "the task force," is established; and be it further

Sec. 2 Task force membership. Resolved: That the task force consists of 13 members appointed as follows:

1. Three members of the Senate appointed by the President of the Senate, including members from each of the 2 parties holding the largest number of seats in the Legislature;

2. Four members of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House, including members from each of the 2 parties holding the largest number of seats in the Legislature;

3. Three members appointed by the Governor who possess expertise in public assistance programs and programs to assist people to achieve employment. One member must represent the executive branch, one member must represent municipal administrators of general assistance programs and one member must represent employers in the State;

4. One member appointed by the President of the Senate who represents the academic community and possesses policy and research expertise in public assistance programs and poverty; and

5. Two members appointed by the Speaker of the House who possess expertise in public assistance programs. One member must represent nonprofit organizations and possess policy expertise in public assistance programs that help people move out of poverty, and one member must be a person who has successfully transitioned from poverty and reliance on the State's public benefit programs to sustainable employment; and be it further

Sec. 3 Cooperation. Resolved: That the Department of Health and Human Services, other state agencies and the Maine State Housing Authority shall provide information and assistance to the task force as requested by the task force for the performance of its duties; and be it further

Sec. 4 Chairs. Resolved: That the first-named Senate member is the Senate chair and the first-named House of Representatives member is the House chair of the task force; and be it further

Sec. 5 Appointments; convening of task force. Resolved: That all appointments must be made no later than 30 days following the effective date of this resolve. The appointing authorities shall notify the Executive Director of the Legislative Council once all appointments have been completed. After appointment of all members, the chairs shall call and convene the first meeting of the task force. If 30 days or more after the effective date of this resolve a majority of but not all appointments have been made, the chairs may request authority and the Legislative Council may grant authority for the task force to meet and conduct its business; and be it further

Sec. 6 Duties. Resolved: That the task force shall meet up to 8 times to review and make evidence-based recommendations, including any suggested legislation, on initiatives needed to help families receiving municipal, state or federal public assistance move out of poverty to independence through employment. The task force shall identify any provisions in current state policy, law and rules that penalize or create a disincentive to work and make needed recommendations to eliminate any such barriers and propose new policies that support and promote stable and lasting employment. In performing its work, the task force shall review categories of public assistance available to residents of the State and eligibility requirements; termination of eligibility, assistance and benefits; transitional assistance and benefits; barriers to independence from public assistance; related legislative reports and academic research conducted in the State; and initiatives to assist people to achieve employment; and be it further

Sec. 7 Staff assistance. Resolved: That the Legislative Council shall provide necessary staffing services to the task force; and be it further

Sec. 8 Report. Resolved: That, no later than December 2, 2015, the task force shall submit a report that includes its findings and recommendations, including suggested legislation, for presentation to the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services.

Emergency clause. In view of the emergency cited in the preamble, this legislation takes effect when approved.

SUMMARY

This resolve establishes the Task Force on Independence from Public Assistance. The task force is directed to review and make evidence-based recommendations on initiatives needed to help families receiving public assistance to move out of poverty to independence through employment. The task force must meet up to 8 times, consists of 13 members and must report by December 2, 2015 with its findings and recommendations and suggested legislation to the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services.