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Resolve, To Establish the Study Commission on the Social Emotional Learning and Development of Maine's Young Children

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 Study Commission on the Social Emotional Learning and Development of Maine's Young Children aims to promote the social development of young children and reduce expulsions in early child care and education settings in the State; 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 Commission established. Resolved: That, notwithstanding Joint Rule 353, the Study Commission on the Social Emotional Learning and Development of Maine's Young Children, referred to in this resolve as "the commission," is established; and be it further

Sec. 2 Commission membership. Resolved: That the commission consists of 17 members appointed as follows:

1. One member of the Senate, appointed by the President of the Senate;
2. One member of the House of Representatives, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives;
3. Thirteen members appointed by the Commissioner of Education as follows:
 - A. One representative of the Department of Education, Child Development Services System;
 - B. One representative of the Department of Education, Office of Special Services;
 - C. One elementary school principal;
 - D. One representative of an organization promoting child welfare;
 - E. One representative of an organization promoting children's mental health;
 - F. One representative of an organization promoting early childhood advocacy;
 - G. One person with experience in the early and periodic screening, diagnostic and treatment benefit under Medicaid;
 - H. One pediatrician representing the Maine chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics;
 - I. One representative of the child care industry; and
 - J. Four members of the Maine Children's Growth Council; and

4. Two members appointed by the Commissioner of Health and Human Service as follows:

A. One representative of the Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Child and Family Services, Child Care Services; and

B. One representative of the Department of Health and Human Services, Head Start and Early Head Start; and be it further

Sec. 3 Chairs. Resolved: That the Senate member is the Senate chair and the House of Representatives member is the House chair of the commission; and be it further

Sec. 4 Appointments; convening of commission. 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 appointments of all members, the chairs shall call and convene the first meeting of the commission. 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 commission to meet and conduct its business; and be it further

Sec. 5 Duties. Resolved: That the commission shall:

1. Develop a comprehensive inventory of the policies, rules, funding and services for early child care and education programs that promote young children's social emotional learning and development and that address children's behavioral needs and make recommendations based on the inventory. The inventory and recommendations must address assets and gaps relating to availability, funding and delivery of services that support the healthy social emotional learning and development of young children across the State;

2. Examine the State's current capacity to provide education, training and professional development to early childhood program staff and educators to strengthen skills in promoting young children's social emotional learning and development and effectively addressing children's behavioral needs;

3. Gather existing data relating to the expulsion, suspension and exclusionary discipline practices with regard to young children up to 8 years of age and teachers' reporting requirements for professional development and classroom supports in addressing children's behavioral needs; and

4. Make recommendations regarding:

A. Appropriate and necessary training for early childhood educators and support staff to support and teach young children the skills the children need for healthy social emotional learning and development;

B. Staff competencies and evidence-based intervention techniques and approaches that prevent expulsion, suspension and other exclusionary discipline practices, including standards for effective early childhood mental health consultation and positive behavior intervention and support strategies;

C. Changes in the preparation of early childhood educators that facilitate an understanding of how to teach children social emotional skills and the management of behaviors;

D. Methods and guidelines for the ongoing collection of data to monitor the expulsion, suspension and exclusionary discipline practices with regard to young children;

E. Model policies relating to the social emotional learning and development of children that include practices that are developmentally appropriate, contain nondiscriminatory discipline procedures and guidelines and promote an integrated classroom. The recommendations must include a plan to appropriately transition children in early child care settings to preschool and kindergarten and support working parents and may include a pilot program;

F. Changes to law and policies that will support a continuum of integrated social emotional learning and development opportunities for young children based on the inventory of resources and capacity of early childhood programs under subsection 1;

G. How early childhood programs and public schools can collaborate and ensure that a system is developed that efficiently utilizes limited resources and provides continuity of care for young children moving between programs and schools; and

H. Parent education that promotes young children's social emotional growth and effective responses to behavioral challenges; and be it further

Sec. 6 Staff assistance. Resolved: That the Department of Education shall provide necessary staffing services to the commission; and be it further

Sec. 7 Report. Resolved: That, no later than December 2, 2015, the commission shall submit a report that includes its findings and recommendations, including suggested legislation, to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. The Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs may report out legislation based upon the report to the Second Regular Session of the 127th Legislature.

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

SUMMARY

This resolve creates the Study Commission on the Social Emotional Learning and Development of Maine's Young Children to promote the social emotional learning and development of young children and reduce expulsions in early child care and education settings in the State by making an inventory of policies, rules, funding and services regarding early child care and education in the State and making recommendations, including suggested legislation, to strengthen the support for young children's social emotional learning and development and to address young children's behavioral needs.