

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 Strengthen the Maine Children's Growth Council

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

Sec. 1. 5 MRSA §24001, sub-§8, as amended by PL 2011, c. 388, §2, is further amended to read:

8. Staffing; funding. The council may hire staff as necessary for its work and as resources permit. The council may request staff assistance from the Child Development Services System under Title 20-A, section 7209 and the Department of Health and Human Services. Upon request, the Child Development Services System and the Department of Health and Human Services shall provide staff assistance to the council. The council may accept grant funding and other funding as may be available for the work of the council.

Sec. 2. 5 MRSA §24002, sub-§1, as amended by PL 2011, c. 388, §3, is further amended to read:

1. Duties. The duties of the council include, but are not limited to:

A. Reviewing and addressing recommendations of legislative studies and advisory committees regarding young children and the Children's Cabinet;

B. Adopting and updating a long-term plan for investment in the healthy development of young children that will achieve sustainable social and financial investment in the healthy development of young children and their families.

(1) In adopting and updating the plan the council shall consult and coordinate with members of the public, the Children's Cabinet, the Department of Education, the Department of Health and Human Services and advocates, community agencies and providers of early care and education and services to children and their families; monitor and evaluate progress in accomplishing the plan's vision, goals and performance indicators and best practice research; and consider the changing economic and demographic conditions and the effect of investments on economic growth and productivity.

(2) The plan must include strategies:

(a) To create and sustain a unified, statewide early childhood services system that provides essential resources for children, shares common standards for quality, respects the diversity and uniqueness of young children and their families, reflects a commitment to

sustainable growth, includes family representation, recognizes the importance of child care in sustaining employment for parents and recognizes the value of new forms of cooperation among government, business and society in achieving the goals of the plan; and

(b) For overall investment and prioritization of early childhood and education programs, services and initiatives and to address workforce education and training issues, utilization of community partners across the ~~state~~State and investments in technology and infrastructure; and

C. Reporting by January 15, ~~2011~~2018 and every ~~2 years~~annually thereafter at the ~~start of the first regular session of the Legislature~~ to the Governor, the Legislative Council and the one or more joint standing committees of the Legislature having jurisdiction over health, human services, taxation and education matters on the activities and accomplishments of the ~~council~~Maine Children's Growth Council and its long-term plan for investment in the healthy development of young children, and issuing such other reports as the ~~council~~Maine Children's Growth Council determines to be appropriate. The annual report must include, but is not limited to:

(1) A description of the involvement of each state agency listed in section 24001, subsection 3, paragraphs K and L in providing early childhood and education services to young children;

(2) A description of the plans and goals of each state agency listed in section 24001, subsection 3, paragraphs K and L as those plans and goals affect the provision of services to young children;

(3) Recommendations for changes to laws and rules to reduce barriers to collaboration and coordination among federally funded and state-funded programs and services for young children and their families and to improve the quality of programs and services for young children statewide. The recommendations must include, but are not limited to, methods to:

(a) Promote statewide the availability of services and programs for young children and their families;

(b) Promote statewide the financial resources available to young children and their families for early childhood and education programs and services; and

(c) Enhance early childhood and education programs and services for young children, including child development services, education services, supervision services, health services and social services;

(4) A proposed budget for the implementation of the council's recommendations; and

(5) Suggested legislation needed to implement the council's recommendations:

D. Developing and periodically updating a process for evaluating the council's effectiveness in performing its duties and for evaluating progress in accomplishing the long-term plan's visions, goals and performance indicators pursuant to paragraph B, subparagraph (1); and

E. In accordance with the process developed under paragraph D, periodically performing an evaluation of the council's effectiveness in performing its duties and of the progress in accomplishing the long-term plan's visions, goals and performance indicators pursuant to paragraph B, subparagraph (1).

Sec. 3. Evaluation; design and performance. By January 1, 2018, the Maine Children's Growth Council, created in the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 5, section 24001, shall develop an evaluation process pursuant to Title 5, section 24002, subsection 1, paragraph D. By August 1, 2018, the Maine Children's Growth Council shall perform an evaluation pursuant to Title 5, section 24002, subsection 1, paragraph E.

SUMMARY

This bill adds duties for the Maine Children's Growth Council. The bill requires the Maine Children's Growth Council to include additional information in the council's report to the Governor and certain legislative committees. It changes the reporting requirement from every 2 years to annually and includes the Legislative Council as a recipient of the report. The bill directs the Maine Children's Growth Council to develop an evaluation process and to periodically perform an evaluation of its effectiveness in performing its duties. The bill authorizes the Maine Children's Growth Council to receive staff assistance from the Child Development Services System and the Department of Health and Human Services.