

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 Expand Competitive Skills Scholarships and Strengthen Maine's Workforce Development Programs**

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

**Sec. 1. 26 MRSA §1166, sub-§1, ¶B**, as amended by PL 2007, c. 506, §1, is further amended to read:

B. "Competitive Skills Scholarship Fund planned yield" means the percentage of wages, as defined in section 1043, subsection 19, equal to ~~.02%~~.04% of the total wages for each contributing employer subject to this chapter.

**Sec. 2. 26 MRSA §2033, sub-§3**, as enacted by PL 2007, c. 352, Pt. A, §3, is amended to read:

**3. Notice.** The department shall provide notice, including individual written notice, signs and other effective outreach methods, to inform people of the program and the education, training and support available from or through the program to individuals seeking work, education or training in the department's career centers. Outreach efforts must be tailored to focus on, but may not be limited to, the following target demographics: unemployed and underemployed workers, veterans, immigrants, recipients of benefits under the statewide food supplement program pursuant to Title 22, section 3104, low-skilled manufacturing workers and students enrolled in postsecondary education. The department shall also collaborate with education and training partners, employers, trade associations and other entities to improve outreach to target populations in industry sectors identified as having a significant demand for a more highly skilled workforce. Additionally, the department shall conduct outreach efforts with employers in industries with significant demand for skilled labor that have been approved for participation in the program pursuant to subsection 4 when those industries are at risk, diversifying or growing and whose employees may be eligible for the program.

**Sec. 3. 26 MRSA §2033, sub-§4, ¶A**, as amended by PL 2011, c. 627, §4, is further amended to read:

A. The education or training provided through the program must be for employment in industries with significant demand for skilled labor that have been:

- (1) Identified by the Center for Workforce Research and Information as providing opportunity for employment in jobs with high compensation;
- (2) Recommended by the State Workforce Investment Board; and
- (3) Approved by the Governor or the Governor's designee.

The identification, recommendation and approval of industries pursuant to this paragraph must take into account direct employer input in identifying the inventory and growth of highly skilled jobs that are currently or soon to be present in the State's economy, with an emphasis on jobs in industries that are expanding, jobs that have recently emerged in significant numbers and jobs that may be anticipated based on business trends. This identification, recommendation and approval must also take into account changing demographics, emerging trends and innovations and must include traditional industries in the State in which innovations and new technologies are creating demand for skilled workers, including, but not limited to, food production, farming, fisheries, wood products and manufacturing.

**Sec. 4. 26 MRSA §2033, sub-§8, ¶B**, as enacted by PL 2007, c. 352, Pt. A, §3, is amended to read:

B. Prior to the establishment of a plan, a participant must be given:

(1) A description of the program, including a list of services and supports available through the program and nontraditional employment opportunities, so that the participant may identify a suitable employment goal and the services needed to participate in the program;

(2) The opportunity to learn about and examine relevant labor market information related to identified industries and the participant's employment preference;

(3) If the participant's employment goal is an occupation for which an apprenticeship may be available, information about the department's apprenticeship program under chapter 33; ~~and~~

(4) Information about and assistance in applying for other services that will assist the participant in succeeding in the plan and prevent any unnecessary expenditure of resources by the program, including federal financial aid provided under the federal Higher Education Act of 1965, 20 United States Code, Chapter 28; the family development account program under Title 10, chapter 110, subchapter 4-A; the state and federal earned income tax credit; health care resources; unemployment compensation; dislocated worker benefits; trade adjustment assistance; and other services available from other departments of State Government including the Department of Health and Human Services; and

(5) Comprehensive career planning services that will enable the participant to identify a career goal and understand the financial costs and benefits of the education or training needed to meet that goal. The department may partner with other entities in providing comprehensive career planning services under a memorandum of understanding that specifies the requirements for career goals under the program.

**Sec. 5. Competitive Skills Scholarship Fund expenditures.** The Department of Labor shall allocate an additional \$3,000,000 for use in the Competitive Skills Scholarship Program to increase enrollment in the program for fiscal year 2017-18 to a level that is approximately double the number of individuals enrolled in fiscal year 2016-17. At least 25% of these additional allocated funds per fiscal year must be reserved for the use of program participants who are also participants in the statewide food supplement program administered by the State pursuant to the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 22, section 3104.

**Sec. 6. Appropriations and allocations.** The following appropriations and allocations are made.

**LABOR, DEPARTMENT OF**

**Employment Services Activity 0852**

Initiative: Allocates an additional \$3,000,000 for use in the Competitive Skills Scholarship Program on an ongoing basis. This allocation will be offset by increased revenue to the Competitive Skills Scholarship Fund from an increase in the rate of the employer contribution to the fund in the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 26, section 1166, subsection 1, paragraph B.

<b>COMPETITIVE SKILLS SCHOLARSHIP FUND</b>	<b>2017-18</b>	<b>2018-19</b>
All Other	\$3,000,000	\$3,000,000
<b>COMPETITIVE SKILLS SCHOLARSHIP FUND TOTAL</b>	<b>\$3,000,000</b>	<b>\$3,000,000</b>

**SUMMARY**

This bill makes a number of changes to the Competitive Skills Scholarship Program administered by the Department of Labor, including the following.

1. It doubles the current employer contribution rate to the Competitive Skills Scholarship Fund.
2. It allocates an additional \$3,000,000 on an ongoing basis from the Competitive Skills Scholarship Fund for the purpose of doubling the number of participants enrolled from the number of currently enrolled participants.
3. It dedicates 25% of the additional allocated funds per fiscal year for the use of program participants who are also participants in the federal supplemental nutrition assistance program administered by the State pursuant to the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 22, section 3104.
4. It makes changes to the criteria used to determine approved education and training under the Competitive Skills Scholarship Program, including consideration of employer input, changing demographics and traditional industries in the State in which innovations and new technologies are creating a demand for skilled workers.

5. It requires that a participant be given information about and assistance in applying for the family development account program under Title 10, chapter 110, subchapter 4-A.

6. It also adds a requirement that a participant be offered comprehensive career planning services prior to the program's development of an individual career plan with the participant.