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An Act To Require the State To Fund 50 Percent of Public Preschool Programs

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

Sec. 1. 20-A MRSA §4254, sub-§4 is enacted to read:

4. Minimum funding for 2nd and subsequent years. In each year a school administrative unit operates an approved public preschool program, other than the year in which it receives start-up funding in accordance with section 4271, the State shall provide at least 50% of the funding for the program based upon the statewide average of per-pupil costs of public preschool programs. If funding is not provided under chapter 606-B to carry out the provisions of this subsection, the State shall provide an amount necessary to fund 50% of the public preschool program from a source other than funding provided in chapter 606-B. Prior to December 15th of each year, the commissioner, with the approval of the state board, shall certify to the Governor and to the Department of Administrative and Financial Services, Bureau of the Budget the funding levels the commissioner recommends to carry out the purposes of this subsection. The commissioner shall include these funding levels in the department's request to the Legislature for appropriations from the General Fund to carry out the purposes of this subsection.

SUMMARY

This bill requires the State to fund a minimum of 50% of the costs of an approved public preschool program for each year a school administrative unit operates the program, other than the year in which the school administrative unit receives start-up funds for the program. If funds for essential programs and services do not provide the funding necessary to fund a minimum of 50% of approved public preschool programs, the State is directed to use other funding sources and the Commissioner of Education is directed to include the funding levels necessary in the Department of Education's request to the Legislature for appropriations from the General Fund.