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Legislative Document

No. 1603

H.P. 1192

House of Representatives, April 27, 2021

**An Act To Implement the Recommendations of the Committee To
Study the Feasibility of Creating Basic Income Security**

Reference to the Committee on Health and Human Services suggested and ordered printed.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "R. B. Hunt".

ROBERT B. HUNT
Clerk

Presented by Representative MEYER of Eliot.
Cosponsored by Representative: PERRY of Calais, Senator: VITELLI of Sagadahoc.

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

2 **Sec. 1. 5 MRSA §3109** is enacted to read:

3 **§3109. Committee To Improve the Effectiveness and Accessibility of Maine's Safety**
4 **Net and Work Support Programs**

5 **1. Committee To Improve the Effectiveness and Accessibility of Maine's Safety**
6 **Net and Work Support Programs.** The Committee To Improve the Effectiveness and
7 Accessibility of Maine's Safety Net and Work Support Programs, referred to in this section
8 as "the committee," is established within the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and
9 the Future. For purposes of this section, "safety net program" means a program designed
10 to provide economic assistance to individuals lacking adequate income and assets and
11 "work support program" means a program that provides economic support or services to
12 help individuals successfully gain or retain employment and increase their economic
13 security.

14 A. The director shall appoint all members of the committee and at a minimum:

15 (1) At least 2 individuals who receive or previously received support from safety
16 net programs or work support programs;

17 (2) An academic specializing in issues related to poverty and the workforce;

18 (3) Staff from departments administering key safety net programs or work support
19 programs, including but not limited to the Department of Health and Human
20 Services, the Department of Labor, the Department of Education, the Department
21 of Administrative and Financial Services, Maine Revenue Services and the Maine
22 State Housing Authority;

23 (4) Individuals familiar with sources of data and technology related to participation
24 in safety net programs or work support programs or other factors related to
25 individuals living in poverty or with limited incomes;

26 (5) At least 2 individuals from advocacy organizations with expertise in policy or
27 legal matters related to programs administered by state, federal or municipal
28 governments;

29 (6) A representative from the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial,
30 Indigenous and Maine Tribal Populations established in chapter 631; and

31 (7) Other stakeholders as determined by the director.

32 B. The committee shall review existing safety net programs and work support
33 programs and make recommendations to improve the coordination and adequacy of
34 existing safety net and work support programs with the goal of improving basic income
35 security for residents. The committee shall consider the correlation among guaranteed
36 basic income programs, a reduction in poverty, increased economic stability and the
37 beneficial impact on the State of a guaranteed basic income program. In developing
38 recommendations, the committee shall:

39 (1) Review opportunities to take advantage of options for the State available under
40 federal law to improve the adequacy of safety net programs and work support
41 programs or other essential resources to help individuals in need to meet basic
42 needs;

1 (2) Examine the ways in which the State could better coordinate safety net
2 programs and work support programs to simplify access and improve efficiency,
3 including:

4 (a) Streamlining eligibility for safety net programs and work support
5 programs;

6 (b) Facilitating automatic or allowing an individual to opt out of enrollment;

7 (c) Integrating applications and application processes between programs and
8 departments;

9 (d) Improving data sharing while protecting client confidentiality to make it
10 easier for individuals to be screened for, apply for and receive safety net
11 programs and work support programs assistance;

12 (e) Removing unnecessary barriers for individuals to access the safety net
13 programs and work support programs for which those individuals are eligible;

14 (f) Improving communication and knowledge sharing between governmental
15 departments to ensure that accurate information is provided to individuals
16 seeking assistance; and

17 (g) Making the application process more efficient and capable of meeting the
18 unique needs of the individuals who are applying for assistance;

19 (3) Review opportunities to change policy and processes to reduce benefit cliffs
20 and negative interactions between existing programs;

21 (4) Determine how the State could improve access to safety net programs or work
22 support programs for historically disadvantaged racial, indigenous and tribal
23 populations with the goal of reducing racial and economic disparities in the State;
24 and

25 (5) Make eligibility requirements for safety net programs and work support
26 programs clear and understandable for the public.

27 C. The committee shall conduct periodic reviews of safety net programs and work
28 support programs and report findings and recommendations, including any suggested
29 legislation, annually to the office and the joint standing committee having jurisdiction
30 over health and human services matters. After reviewing the report, the joint standing
31 committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over health and human services
32 matters may report out legislation relating to the subject matter of the report.

33 **Sec. 2. Committee To Study the Feasibility of Creating Basic Income**
34 **Security; reestablished.** The Committee To Study the Feasibility of Creating Basic
35 Income Security, referred to in this section as "the committee," is established.

36 1. The committee consists of 11 members appointed as follows:

37 A. Three members of the Senate appointed by the President of the Senate, including a
38 representative of each of the following joint standing committees:

39 (1) The Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing;

40 (2) The Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services; and

41 (3) The Joint Standing Committee on Taxation;

- 1 B. Three members of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the
2 House, including a representative of each of the following joint standing committees:
- 3 (1) The Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing;
 - 4 (2) The Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services; and
 - 5 (3) The Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic
6 Advancement and Business;
- 7 C. Two members of the public who represent low-income workers and recipients of
8 public benefits, appointed by the President of the Senate;
- 9 D. One member of the public who represents business and industry, appointed by the
10 Speaker of the House;
- 11 E. One member of the public who represents higher education, appointed by the
12 Speaker of the House; and
- 13 F. One member of the public who represents a trade union, appointed by the Governor.
- 14 2. The first-named Senate member is the Senate chair and the first-named House of
15 Representatives member is the House chair of the committee.
- 16 3. All appointments must be made no later than 30 days following the effective date
17 of this section. The appointing authorities shall notify the Executive Director of the
18 Legislative Council once all appointments have been completed. After appointment of all
19 members, the chairs shall call and convene the first meeting of the committee. If 30 days
20 or more after the effective date of this resolve a majority of but not all appointments have
21 been made, the chairs may request authority and the Legislative Council may grant
22 authority for the committee to meet and conduct its business.
- 23 4. The committee shall examine and assess the feasibility, economic impact and
24 poverty reduction effect of providing basic income security through a direct cash payment
25 system and other programs that are designed to help individuals and families become more
26 economically secure.
- 27 The committee shall consider what the State can do to further the goal of helping
28 individuals and families to become more economically secure and to move state residents
29 towards improved economic security. The committee shall make recommendations about
30 what the Federal Government can do to help achieve this goal. The committee shall work
31 in coordination with the Committee To Improve the Effectiveness and Accessibility of
32 Maine's Safety Net and Work Support Programs as established in the Maine Revised
33 Statutes, Title 5, section 3109.
- 34 In fulfilling its duties under this section, the committee shall as necessary invite input from
35 the Department of Administrative and Financial Services, Maine Revenue Services and
36 from the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future.
- 37 5. The Legislative Council shall provide necessary staffing services to the committee,
38 except that the Legislative Council staff support is not authorized when the Legislature is
39 in regular or special session.
- 40 6. No later than December 1, 2021, the committee shall submit a report that includes
41 its findings and recommendations, including suggested legislation, for presentation to the

1 Joint Standing Committee on Labor and Housing. The Joint Standing Committee on Labor
2 and Housing is authorized to report out a bill related to the report.

3 7. The committee shall seek funding contributions to fully fund the costs of the study
4 including the hiring of an outside consultant to conduct a feasibility study or to provide the
5 committee with additional staffing needs, if funding permits. All funding is subject to
6 approval by the Legislative Council in accordance with its policies. If sufficient
7 contributions to fund the study have not been received within 30 days after the effective
8 date of this section, no meetings are authorized and no expenses of any kind may be
9 incurred or reimbursed.

10 SUMMARY

11 This bill implements recommendations of the Committee to Study the Feasibility of
12 Creating Basic Income Security. The bill establishes a permanent committee within the
13 Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future to examine current safety net and
14 work support programs to: improve the adequacy of safety net and work support programs;
15 better coordinate these programs to simplify access and improve efficiency; change policy
16 and process to reduce benefit cliffs and negative interactions between existing programs;
17 improve access to safety net and work support programs for historically disadvantaged
18 racial, indigenous and tribal populations with the goal of reducing racial and economic
19 disparities in the State; and make eligibility requirements for safety net and work support
20 programs clear and understandable for members of the public.

21 The bill also reestablishes the Committee to Study the Feasibility of Creating Basic
22 Income Security to continue the work of the previous study committee. The bill directs the
23 study committee to examine and make recommendations about the feasibility and
24 economic impact and poverty reduction effect of providing basic income security through
25 a direct cash payment system and other programs designed to help individuals and families
26 become more economically secure. The bill authorizes the committee to seek funding
27 contributions to fully fund the costs of the study including the hiring of an outside
28 consultant to conduct a feasibility study or to provide the committee with additional staffing
29 needs, if funding permits.