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Legislative Document

No. 1859

S.P. 729

In Senate, May 5, 2025

An Act to Improve Access to Child Care and Early Childhood Education by Establishing Regional Resource Hubs

Received by the Secretary of the Senate on May 1, 2025. Referred to the Committee on Health and Human Services pursuant to Joint Rule 308.2 and ordered printed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D M Grant'.

DAREK M. GRANT
Secretary of the Senate

Presented by Senator INGWERSEN of York.
Cosponsored by Representative GRAHAM of North Yarmouth and
Senators: CARNEY of Cumberland, DUSON of Cumberland, PIERCE of Cumberland,
RAFFERTY of York.

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

2 **Sec. 1. 22 MRSA c. 1083** is enacted to read:

3 **CHAPTER 1083**

4 **EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT RESOURCE HUBS**

5 **§4100-D. Regional early childhood learning and development resource hubs**

6 **1. Regional early childhood learning and development resource hubs established.**

7 The department shall establish early childhood learning and development resource hubs,
8 referred to in this section as "resource hubs," to promote early childhood learning and child
9 development, support the needs of families and increase access to high-quality early
10 childhood education. The resource hubs must provide families with the information and
11 support necessary to locate early childhood programs. Each resource hub must be affiliated
12 with an existing regional nonprofit organization in order to facilitate partnerships and avoid
13 duplication of services.

14 **2. Early Childhood Learning and Development Resource Hub Fund.** The Early
15 Childhood Learning and Development Resource Hub Fund is established as a nonlapsing
16 fund within and administered by the department to support the development and
17 administration of resource hubs. The commissioner may accept funds from any public or
18 private source for the purposes described in this chapter.

19 **3. Resource hubs.** By November 1, 2025, the department shall establish 4 regional
20 resource hubs. In establishing and administering resource hubs under this section, the
21 department shall:

22 A. Prioritize the geographical locations of services provided pursuant to the First 4
23 ME Early Care and Education Program established in section 3931;

24 B. Seek input from the Children's Cabinet established in Title 5, section 19131, which
25 shall seek input from local communities to recommend the best regions for additional
26 resource hubs based on child demographics and geography; and

27 C. Ensure that each resource hub maintains an affiliation with a regional nonprofit
28 organization.

29 **4. Duties of resource hubs.** The resource hubs must assist in fostering coordination,
30 collaboration and planning related to early childhood programs and family support
31 programs in order to provide resources to parents, educators, employers and community
32 members. Each resource hub must:

33 A. Conduct a regional needs assessment to determine local supply and demand for
34 child care services, including annual surveys of parents and local employers to
35 determine the capacity of regional child care and local early childhood services
36 providers to supply services;

37 B. Create an annual plan based on the regional needs assessments under paragraph A
38 in collaboration with regional partners, including an annual work plan to meet the child
39 care needs of parents and employers in the region;

- 1 C. Assist parents in applying for the Maine Child Care Affordability Program
2 established in section 3731-A, Head Start programs and other early childhood
3 programs;
- 4 D. Connect parents to and raise awareness of other local and state resources, including
5 community action agencies, public preschools, the Help Maine Grow System under
6 section 3921 and the Child Development Services System under Title 20-A, section
7 7209, subsection 3 and other department programs;
- 8 E. Serve as a resource for public schools and the Child Development Services System
9 under Title 20-A, section 7209, subsection 3 to identify early childhood programs to
10 support the needs of young children with disabilities;
- 11 F. Work with employers and educators to meet local child care needs by supporting
12 the expansion or development of new programs;
- 13 G. Collaborate with programs designed to train individuals interested in opening or
14 expanding child care businesses to support new and existing child care providers with
15 facility expansion or upgrades and business or financial assistance;
- 16 H. Support the needs of educators to navigate state systems, including the Maine Child
17 Care Affordability Program established in section 3731-A and state child care
18 licensing;
- 19 I. Serve as a model for the development of a whole family approach to supporting the
20 needs of families with children. For the purposes of this paragraph, "whole family
21 approach" means a coordinated, strength-based approach to ensure that children and
22 their families can build a path to economic stability;
- 23 J. Provide parents training on child development and parenting skills;
- 24 K. Increase the capacity of child care providers to provide culturally responsive
25 services;
- 26 L. Collaborate with a professional development network of child care providers to
27 deliver regional professional development training;
- 28 M. Collaborate with higher education partners to increase interest in early childhood
29 education as a career opportunity for youth and adults;
- 30 N. Assist with innovative and collaborative partnerships among early childhood
31 services providers related to shared services or cooperative services models to create
32 efficiencies, build capacity, better support educators and staff and increase high-quality
33 programming;
- 34 O. Solicit local funding to support state funding of resource hubs at a 50% match rate;
- 35 P. Based on available funding, provide grants to support the needs of parents, educators
36 and employers to strengthen the accessibility of high-quality early childhood programs;
37 and
- 38 Q. Submit an annual report to the department that includes the following:
39 (1) The source and amount of funds received;

1 (2) The amounts distributed and the purpose of expenditures, including, but not
2 limited to, funds expended to assist early education and child care educators and
3 staff;

4 (3) Any grants provided to early education and child care programs, philanthropic
5 organizations or other stakeholder organizations;

6 (4) Anticipated revenue and expenditure projections for the next fiscal year;

7 (5) Information from the resource hub's regional needs assessment under
8 paragraph A and other information determined necessary by the department; and

9 (6) Recommendations from the resource hub and its partner board established
10 pursuant to subsection 6 regarding improvements to better align and coordinate
11 services for children and families.

12 **5. Duties of department.** The department shall:

13 A. Initiate a competitive request for proposals process and enter into agreements with
14 3rd-party entities to carry out the provisions of this chapter;

15 B. Establish by rule the process through which eligible entities may apply for program
16 funds, the criteria used to make award determinations and the allowable award uses;

17 C. Provide a 50% match rate for entities awarded grants to establish resource hubs;

18 D. Standardize data collection by resource hubs to ensure that the data can be easily
19 compiled for statewide assessment;

20 E. Collaborate with the Department of Education and the Children's Cabinet
21 established in Title 5, section 19131 to address recommendations on improving the
22 coordination and service delivery for children in the State and their families, based on
23 a whole family approach, as defined in subsection 4, paragraph I;

24 F. Engage with communities statewide to promote and build the capacity for additional
25 participation in the First 4 ME Early Care and Education Program established in section
26 3931; and

27 G. Perform other functions necessary to carry out the provisions of this chapter,
28 including the monitoring of grantees.

29 **6. Regional partner boards.** A resource hub must establish a board of local
30 community partners to assist with oversight of the resource hub and to support the work of
31 the resource hub of bringing together local partners to improve the availability and quality
32 of early childhood services for children and families in their communities. Members must
33 include a broad representation of local partners, including parents, early childhood
34 educators, business leaders, school leadership, community action agency staff, early
35 intervention specialists, community college or university staff, regional health or medical
36 center staff and other child and family community advocates as determined by community
37 need.

38 **7. Report.** The department shall, beginning January 1, 2027 and annually thereafter,
39 submit a report to the joint standing committees of the Legislature having jurisdiction over
40 health and human services matters and education and cultural affairs and to the members
41 of the Children's Cabinet established in Title 5, section 19131 and its advisory council
42 regarding the status of state and regional early childhood education and family needs, data

1 collected by resource hubs and any related recommendations to increase access to early
2 childhood services.

3 **8. Rules.** The department shall adopt rules to implement the requirements of this
4 chapter. Rules adopted pursuant to this chapter are routine technical rules as defined in
5 Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

6 **Sec. 2. Resource hubs.** By December 15, 2025, the Department of Health and
7 Human Services shall provide to the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human
8 Services the department's plans for establishing resource hubs under the Maine Revised
9 Statutes, Title 22, section 4100-D in addition to the 4 resource hubs required to be
10 established pursuant to Title 22, section 4100-D, subsection 3. By July 1, 2027, the
11 department shall establish additional resource hubs.

12 **Sec. 3. Appropriations and allocations.** The following appropriations and
13 allocations are made.

14 **HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, DEPARTMENT OF**

15 **Child Care Services 0563**

16 Initiative: Provides allocations to establish one Social Service Program Specialist II
17 position, beginning October 1, 2025, to support development of early childhood learning
18 and development resource hubs.

FEDERAL BLOCK GRANT FUND	2025-26	2026-27
POSITIONS - LEGISLATIVE COUNT	1,000	1,000
Personal Services	\$89,587	\$114,548
All Other	\$6,500	\$6,500
FEDERAL BLOCK GRANT FUND TOTAL	\$96,087	\$121,048

25 **Child Care Services 0563**

26 Initiative: Provides funding for contracts for 4 early childhood learning and development
27 resource hubs, beginning April 1, 2026.

GENERAL FUND	2025-26	2026-27
All Other	\$187,500	\$750,000
GENERAL FUND TOTAL	\$187,500	\$750,000

FEDERAL BLOCK GRANT FUND	2025-26	2026-27
All Other	\$187,500	\$750,000
FEDERAL BLOCK GRANT FUND TOTAL	\$187,500	\$750,000

38 **HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES,**
39 **DEPARTMENT OF**
40 **DEPARTMENT TOTALS**

	2025-26	2026-27
GENERAL FUND	\$187,500	\$750,000

1	FEDERAL BLOCK GRANT FUND	\$283,587	\$871,048
2			
3	DEPARTMENT TOTAL - ALL FUNDS	\$471,087	\$1,621,048

4 **SUMMARY**

5 This bill directs the Department of Health and Human Services to establish, through
6 contracts with community entities, early childhood learning and development resource
7 hubs. The resource hubs must provide families with the information and support necessary
8 to locate early childhood programs; assist families in connecting with other resources in
9 the State; support the training of child care workers; and build networks among child care
10 providers. The bill requires the department, beginning January 1, 2027 and annually
11 thereafter, to submit a report to the joint standing committees of the Legislature having
12 jurisdiction over health and human services matters and education and cultural affairs and
13 to the members of the Children's Cabinet and its advisory council regarding the status of
14 state and regional early childhood education and family needs, data collected by resource
15 hubs and any related recommendations to increase access to early childhood services. The
16 bill provides \$471,087 in funds in fiscal year 2025-26 and \$1,621,048 in fiscal year
17 2026-27 to support the purposes of the resource hubs.