



JANET T. MILLS  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MAINE  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
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AUGUSTA, ME 04333-0023

PENDER MAKIN  
COMMISSIONER

March 19, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Senate Chair  
Representative Murphy, House Chair  
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and Distinguished Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee:

L.D. 384, An Act to Prevent Student Homelessness, establishes the Student Homelessness Prevention Program within the Maine Department of Education (DOE). The purpose of the program is to provide direct financial assistance to prevent student homelessness and support students and their families in maintaining stable permanent housing and is built upon the success of the Homelessness Prevention Pilot. The bill also proposes rulemaking authority for the Department of Education.

Title 20-A, MRS §§ 261, 5205(7) has vested rulemaking authority on matters related to the education of homeless students with the Department of Education. Rule Chapter 14 ensures that the rights of homeless students are protected in accordance with the McKinney-Vento Act and outlines procedures for identifying and enrolling homeless students and for resolving disputes over their identification and educational placement. Additional rulemaking authority is unnecessary.

Students lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence are identified by a school administrative unit's (SAU's) homeless liaison and that identification data is entered in the SAU's student information system (SIS) for annual reporting to the DOE. Identification can occur at any time during the calendar year as homelessness can impact families and youth at any time and affects rural, urban, and suburban areas. Once a student is identified as experiencing homelessness under the Federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, the student carries homeless status and has access to McKinney-Vento provisions through June 30<sup>th</sup> of that school year.


Public Law 2023, Chapter 412 established the Pilot Program to Prevent Student Homelessness (Pilot Program), a two-year pilot program to help prevent student homelessness, administered by the Maine Department of Education (DOE) in the Office of School and Student Supports (O3S). LD 384 would establish the program and continue to provide vital fiscal support to SAUs in meeting statutory requirements of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act as well as continuing to offer SAUs access to unique and flexible funding to prevent homelessness before it happens. For the duration of the two pilot years, McKinney-Vento liaisons throughout Maine have had access to up to \$750 per student for housing-related needs such as rental assistance, utilities, and critical home repairs to help a student avoid homelessness.

For greater detail regarding the Pilot Program to Prevent Student Homelessness, please review the report that the DOE provided to the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee in October 2024.

The Maine Department of Education will be available to provide additional information on L.D. 384, An Act to Prevent Student Homelessness, and to answer any questions during the upcoming work session.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

Handwritten signature of Laura M. Cyr in black ink.

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Laura M. Cyr, Ph.D.

Federal and State Legislative Specialist

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### Timestamp

## Witness Events

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