

OFFICE OF POLICY AND LEGAL ANALYSIS

To: Members, Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
From: Samuel Senft Esq., MPH Legislative Analyst
Date: May 20, 2020
Subj: **LD 247, “An Act To Improve Maine’s Education System” (Daughtry)**

SUMMARY

This bill is a concept draft pursuant to Joint Rule 208. It proposes to enact measures to improve kindergarten to grade 12 education.

The sponsor has presented a proposed amendment.

TESTIMONY

Proponents

- **Senator Daughtry (sponsor)**
 - **Beck Smith, M CCS**
 - **Deborah Parker**
 - **Sam Warren, UMaine Syatem**
 - **Bill Norbert, FAME**
- An amendment is available and would reestablish the 2014 Commission to Study College Affordability and College Completion. Open to any other ideas to are suggested by committee
 - Would like to make clear Maine Maritime included
 - Pandemic has disrupted college plans for many kids while at same time accelerating job shifts and need for credentials of value
 - Committee should reconsider ld 1152.
 - First Commission The group learned about the affordability gap and unmet need of Maine students and ultimately established “that many Maine College students experience a significant affordability gap in their ability to pay for the complete costs of college, even when a myriad of financial sources are tapped such as family resources, part-time work, federal and state grant programs, and educational loans.” (p. 20)
 - Among its chief recommendations were various changes to the Maine State Grant Program (MSGP), including amending the statute to allow for tiered awards when funding allows (not yet) and to provide annual awards of \$2,500 for families with \$0 EFC (they remain just \$1,500), with annual increases of \$250 for each year that the student is enrolled. The Commission further recommended that annual grant awards of \$1,500 be made to families with Expected Family Contributions (EFCs) that are greater than \$0, with annual increases of \$250 for each year that the student is enrolled. The Commission “had no difficulty in concluding that the MSGP grants have not kept pace with inflation—particularly in relation to tuition charged for a 4-year college program.” (p. 17)
 - We should consider better funding of our public higher educational institutions on the front end, as well as increased financial aid through programs like the Maine State Grant, in order to avoid or reduce the need for borrowing and debt to begin with
 - The inclusion of a high school guidance counsellor is appropriate and will add value to the discussion.
 - The timing is right to reconvene this Commission.
 - Public early college, never considered by the Commission, now is supporting thousands of Maine students earn free postsecondary credit while still in high school, increasing the likelihood they’ll

- complete their college degree on-time and for less cost. Hundreds of articulation agreements between UMS and Maine's community colleges now exist, allowing students to transfer seamlessly – pathways we hope to pave between our own UMS universities through our new unified accreditation
- Reestablishing the Commission will give us a chance outside of the constraints of the legislative process to share what is working, consider these new opportunities and challenges, and collaboratively develop strategic solutions to guide public policy and investment in the years ahead.

ISSUES/ MORE INFORMATION :

- Sponsor requested to make clear Maine Maritime included. An amended proposed amendment is included that makes that change.
- The Final Report of the 2014 Commission to Study College Affordability and College Completion is provided.

PRELIMINARY FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT:

- Not yet determined

❖ Ws – warren