

STATE OF MAINE

—
IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD
TWO THOUSAND TWENTY-ONE

—
S.P. 108 - L.D. 247

Resolve, To Reestablish the Commission To Study College Affordability and College Completion

Emergency preamble. Whereas, acts and resolves of the Legislature do not become effective until 90 days after adjournment unless enacted as emergencies; and

Whereas, this legislation needs to take effect before the expiration of the 90-day period in order to allow the commission established in this resolve sufficient time to complete its work; and

Whereas, in the judgment of the Legislature, these facts create an emergency within the meaning of the Constitution of Maine and require the following legislation as immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety; now, therefore, be it

Sec. 1. Commission established. Resolved: That the Commission To Study College Affordability and College Completion, referred to in this resolve as "the commission," is established.

Sec. 2. Membership. Resolved: That, notwithstanding Joint Rule 353, the commission consists of 14 members as follows:

1. The President of the Senate shall appoint:
 - A. Two members of the Senate who serve on the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, including one member of the party holding the largest and one member of the party holding the 2nd largest number of seats in the Legislature;
 - B. One person representing a statewide association of independent higher education institutions;
 - C. One person representing a statewide association of student financial aid directors; and
 - D. One person who is a school counselor in a public high school in the State and who is involved in advising high school students on college admissions and financial aid;
2. The Speaker of the House shall appoint:

A. Three members of the House of Representatives who serve on the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, including 2 members of the party holding the largest and one member of the party holding the 2nd largest number of seats in the Legislature;

B. One person with expertise in higher education policy issues representing a nonprofit entity in the State that provides financial assistance to students or to high schools to assist students with college enrollment; and

C. One person with expertise in higher education policy issues representing a statewide education policy research institute;

3. The Chancellor of the University of Maine System or the chancellor's designee;

4. The President of the Maine Community College System or the president's designee;

5. The President of the Maine Maritime Academy or the president's designee; and

6. The Chief Executive Officer of the Finance Authority of Maine or the chief executive officer's designee.

Sec. 3. Chairs. Resolved: That the first-named Senate member is the Senate chair and the first-named House of Representatives member is the House chair of the commission.

Sec. 4. Appointments; convening of commission. Resolved: That all appointments must be made no later than 30 days following the effective date of this resolve. The appointing authorities shall notify the Executive Director of the Legislative Council once all appointments have been completed. Within 15 days after appointment of all members, the chairs shall call and convene the first meeting of the commission, which must be no later than 30 days following the appointment of all members.

Sec. 5. Duties. Resolved: That the commission shall review the work of the 2014 Commission To Study College Affordability and College Completion, as established by Resolve 2013, chapter 109, and examine and make recommendations on the development of strategies to keep the cost of public postsecondary education in the State affordable and to increase the graduation rate of students enrolled in state-supported public institutions of higher education. In developing strategies and reviewing related cost issues, the commission shall:

1. Examine and update the Maine college affordability gap analysis conducted as part of the work of the 2014 commission;

2. Review average debt incurred by students graduating from community colleges and public universities in the State, the Maine Maritime Academy and private universities in the State with 2-year and 4-year undergraduate degrees;

3. Review average debt incurred by students who begin but do not complete courses of study at community colleges and public universities in the State, the Maine Maritime Academy and private universities in the State and who do not transfer elsewhere to complete a course of study;

4. Review average debt incurred by students completing courses of study from, or attending but not completing courses of study from, institutions offering credentials of value other than 2-year or 4-year undergraduate degrees, not including graduate degrees;

5. Examine the impact of student loan debt on borrowers;
6. Examine the capacity of high school counselors and academic advisors in high schools in the State to adequately advise students regarding their options for postsecondary education, including career and technical education, and financing of postsecondary education; and
7. Examine the potential impacts of no-cost community college education on the workforce of in the State.

Sec. 6. Staffing assistance; information. Resolved: That, notwithstanding Joint Rule 353, the University of Maine System, the Maine Community College System and the Maine Maritime Academy shall provide staffing assistance to the commission. The Finance Authority of Maine shall provide the commission with access to any nonconfidential aggregate information in its student financial assistance database for postsecondary education students in the State necessary to carry out the duties pursuant to section 5. At the request of the commission, the Legislative Council may provide drafting assistance to the commission during a regular or special session and other staff support to the commission when the Legislature is not in regular or special session.

Sec. 7. Report; recommendations. Resolved: That, notwithstanding Joint Rule 353, the commission shall submit a report containing its findings and recommendations pursuant to section 5, including any recommendations for legislation, to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs by January 2, 2022. The joint standing committee may submit a bill related to this report to the Second Regular Session of the 130th Legislature.

Sec. 8. Outside funding for commission activities. Resolved: That the commission may, but is not required to, seek outside funds to provide staff support, consulting or other services or to fund the costs of carrying out the duties and requirements of the commission. Contributions to support the work of the commission may not be accepted from any party having a pecuniary or other vested interest in the outcome of the matters being studied. Any person, other than a state agency, authorized and desiring to make a financial or in-kind contribution must certify to the Legislative Council that it has no pecuniary or other vested interest in the outcome of the commission's activities. All contributions are subject to approval by the Legislative Council. All contributions accepted must be forwarded to the Executive Director of the Legislative Council along with an accounting record that includes the amount of contributions, the date the contributions were received, from whom the contributions were received and the purpose of and any limitation on the use of those contributions. The Executive Director of the Legislative Council shall administer the contributions and shall notify the chairs of the commission when those contributions have been received.

Emergency clause. In view of the emergency cited in the preamble, this legislation takes effect when approved.