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Resolve, To Ensure That Maine Teachers and Paraprofessionals Who Work with Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders Are Highly Qualified

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

Whereas, it is vital to ensure children with autism spectrum disorders in our schools achieve the best educational outcomes possible; and

Whereas, it is necessary to ensure as soon as practicable that teachers of children with autism spectrum disorders are highly qualified; and

Whereas, this legislation provides a means to ensure teachers of children with autism spectrum disorders are highly qualified; 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 Department of Education to study teachers and paraprofessionals who work with children with autism spectrum disorders. Resolved: That the Department of Education shall conduct a study to ensure that teachers and paraprofessionals who work with children with autism spectrum disorders are highly qualified. The department shall convene a work group with broad stakeholder representation. The purpose of the work group is to analyze the qualifications of teachers and paraprofessionals who work with children with autism spectrum disorders and to make recommendations that will assist the department in ensuring that the teachers and paraprofessionals are highly qualified. The work group shall:

1. Examine and recommend the minimum level of competencies that regular educators, special educators and paraprofessionals need to provide educational services to students with autism spectrum disorders;

2. Examine and recommend a specific curriculum that regular and special education teachers must complete for certification in order to be considered a highly qualified teacher for students with autism spectrum disorders;

3. Examine and recommend specific guidelines for paraprofessional supervision, including, but not limited to, daily progress monitoring, problem solving and philosophy;

4. Develop a plan that will phase in a new paraprofessional structure, including basic education technician I, II and III certifications, and create a concentrated and specialized certification for working with students with autism spectrum disorders; and

5. Define a designation for a paraprofessional to be considered highly qualified to provide special education services; and be it further

Sec. 2 Report. Resolved: That the work group under section 1 shall submit its recommendations to the Department of Education by November 1, 2011. The department shall submit a report, including the findings and recommendations from the work group, to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs by December 7, 2011, and the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs is authorized to introduce legislation to the Second Regular Session of the 125th Legislature.

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

SUMMARY

This resolve requires the Department of Education to convene a work group to conduct a study to ensure that teachers and paraprofessionals who work with children with autism spectrum disorders are highly qualified. The work group is required to submit its recommendations to the department by November 1, 2011. The department is required to submit a report, including the findings and recommendations from the work group, to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs by December 7, 2011, and the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs is authorized to introduce legislation to the Second Regular Session of the 125th Legislature.