

Bills of Interest carried over from 1st session

LD 215 - An Act To Improve Student Retention in Maine's Postsecondary Institutions

SUMMARY

This bill directs Jobs for Maine's Graduates, a state-authorized nonprofit corporation, to provide mentoring and counseling services, course guidance and graduation planning, peer support services and financial guidance to up to 200 students and at up to 4 postsecondary institutions in the State for the purpose of significantly increasing the percentage of eligible students who obtain a postsecondary degree. Eligible students must have previously been enrolled in a Jobs for Maine's Graduates high school program, been in or currently be in foster care or have earned a high school equivalency diploma within the 5 years prior to obtaining these services.

LD 440 - An Act To Create a Secure, Therapeutic Mental Health Unit

SUMMARY

This bill provides for the establishment of a secure, therapeutic mental health unit for defendants undergoing court-ordered assessments to determine their competency to stand trial or their criminal culpability and to provide therapeutic care for forensic patients. The bill establishes the unit as follows.

1. It directs the Commissioner of Corrections and the Commissioner of Health and 9 Human Services to enter into an agreement to establish the unit with the sheriff of either Cumberland County or Somerset County.
2. It directs the Department of Corrections to provide security for the unit. Security staff must be dedicated to the unit and trained to provide security in a mental health hospital environment.
3. It directs the Department of Corrections to provide therapeutic mental health care for the unit. The therapeutic mental health care must meet standards established by a national organization on correctional facilities mental health standards. The Department of Health and Human Services may also provide mental health services to the unit upon agreement with the Department of Corrections and the county jail.
4. It requires that the population in a secure, therapeutic mental health unit be separated by sight and sound from the general jail population.
5. It specifies that a person under a court order to undergo a mental evaluation by the State Forensic Service must be admitted to the unit unless the Department of Health and Human Services determines that the person's mental health condition contraindicates admittance to the unit, the person is an inmate at a state correctional facility or there is not a suitable bed available.

Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee Voted Feb 29, 2016 – Divided Report

LD 898 - An Act To Reduce Student Loan Debt through an Expansion of the Educational Opportunity Tax Credit

SUMMARY

This bill allows students who are pursuing or have pursued a course of study available only at a public institution outside the State as part of the New England regional student program offered by the New England Board of Higher Education to be eligible for the educational opportunity tax credit, starting with the tax year beginning January 1, 2016.

New Bills of Interest

LD - 1531 - An Act To Protect Victims of Human Trafficking

SUMMARY

This bill provides that victims of aggravated sex trafficking are eligible to file for protection from abuse orders and protection from harassment orders.

Committee on Judiciary – Public hearing held February 23, 2016. Work session was held March 3, 2016

LD 1537 - An Act To Combat Drug Addiction through Enforcement, Prevention, Treatment and Recovery

SUMMARY

The purpose of this bill is to address drug addiction by increasing the number of drug enforcement agents and by increasing the availability of prevention, treatment and recovery programs.

1. Part A provides ongoing funding for 10 investigative agents in the Department of Public Safety, Maine Drug Enforcement Agency.
2. Part B directs the Department of the Attorney General to administer grants to local law enforcement agencies and county jails located in geographically diverse communities throughout the State to fund projects designed solely to facilitate pathways to community- based treatment, recovery and support services.
3. Part C directs the Department of Health and Human Services to provide grants to a substance abuse treatment entity to develop and operate a 10-bed social detoxification center located in the greater Bangor area.
4. Part D provides ongoing funding for annual grants to the Maine Association of Substance Abuse Programs for the establishment and expansion of peer support recovery centers and the coordination and provision of substance abuse prevention and education in schools and communities.
5. Part E provides funding to increase substance abuse residential treatment and substance abuse outpatient services for the uninsured.
6. Part F transfers \$725,000 in fiscal year 2015-16 and \$1,775,000 in fiscal year 2016-17 from the funds received pursuant to the court order in State of Maine v. McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc. and Standard & Poor's Financial Services, LLC, Kennebec County Superior Court Docket No. BCD-CV-14-49, to the unappropriated surplus of the General Fund.

Signed by Governor (Emergency Measure) January 19, 2016. Public law.

LD 1540 - An Act To Protect All Students in Elementary or Secondary Schools from Sexual Assault by School Officials

SUMMARY

This bill removes the age limit on the victim of the crime of unlawful sexual contact, unlawful sexual touching or gross sexual assault when the victim is a student at an elementary, secondary or special education school and the actor is a person at the school who has authority over the student. The bill also specifies that a parent convicted of the crime of unlawful sexual contact, unlawful sexual touching or gross sexual assault is subject to stricter scrutiny by the court when it determines residence for and contact with a child of the parent when the victim was a student at an elementary, secondary or special education school and the parent was a person at the school who had authority over the student.

Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety. Public hearing was held February 1, 2016. Work session was held February 8, 2016. Committee reported out on February 23, 2016 as Ought to Pass as Amended.

LD 1563 - An Act To Enact the Uniform Interstate Enforcement of Domestic Violence Protection Orders Act

SUMMARY

This bill enacts the Uniform Interstate Enforcement of Domestic Violence Protection Orders Act approved by the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws in 2002. The purposes of the bill and section-by-section descriptions are included in the Comments provided by the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws. The Uniform Act is intended to be consistent with the federal Violence Against Women Act as reauthorized in 2013 in Public Law 113-4. The full faith and credit provisions are codified in 18 United States Code, Section 2265. 9 The Uniform Act provides an optional registration process for domestic violence protection orders, known as "protection from abuse orders" in Maine, issued by a tribuna in another state. A protection order from another state may be registered in Maine by 12 presenting a certified copy of the order to the office of the clerk of any District Court or of any Superior Court of this State. The Maine Uniform Enforcement of Foreign Judgments Act, which currently applies to foreign protection orders, is amended to clarify that the new Uniform Interstate Enforcement of Domestic Violence Protection Orders Act may also be used to enforce foreign protection orders.

Committee on Judiciary. Public hearing was held February 18, 2016. Work session was held March 3, 2016.

**LD 1577 - An Act To Increase the Availability of Mental Health Services
(Governor's Bill)**

SUMMARY

This bill provides that, under certain circumstances, the Commissioner of Health and Human Services or the commissioner's designee may determine that a mental health unit at a correctional facility is an appropriate institution or program for the placement of persons who have been determined to be incompetent to stand trial or not criminally responsible by reason of insanity.

Committee on Health and Human Services. Public hearing was held February 24, 2016 (30 testimonies). Work session is March 4, 2016.

LD 1594 - An Act To Direct the Commissioner of Education To Develop a Model Policy Regarding Substance Abuse Education in Maine Schools

SUMMARY

This bill requires the Commissioner of Education, in consultation with organizations that have expertise in substance abuse prevention education, to develop a model policy for substance abuse prevention education that is available to students in grades 6 to 12.

Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. Public Hearing was held February 29, 2016. Work session was held March 1, 2016. Committee voted Ought Not to Pass on March 1, 2016.

LD 1616 – An Act To Expand Geropsychiatric Facility Capacity

SUMMARY

This bill, which is a recommendation of the Commission To Study Difficult-to-place Patients, requires the Department of Health and Human Services to increase the number of geropsychiatric beds by up to 25 beds. The beds may be in nursing facilities, private nonmedical institutions or a combination of both. The beds must be made available in underserved parts of the State, some specifically to be made available in the northern part of the State. The beds are funded and therefore are exempt from MaineCare budget neutrality provisions.

Committee on health and human Services. Public hearing was held on March 1, 2016. Work session is March 4, 2016