

**Bills of Interest carried over from 1<sup>st</sup> 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 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.

**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.

**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.

**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