



131st MAINE LEGISLATURE

LD 1841

LR 958(02)

An Act to Establish the Hope and Inclusion Scholarship Program

Fiscal Note for Bill as Amended by Committee Amendment " "

Committee: Education and Cultural Affairs

Fiscal Note Required: Yes

Fiscal Note

Reduction in state subsidy - local school administrative units

	FY 2023-24	FY 2024-25	Projections FY 2025-26	Projections FY 2026-27
Net Cost (Savings)				
General Fund	\$75,524	\$107,191	\$110,731	\$114,398
Appropriations/Allocations				
General Fund	\$75,524	\$107,191	\$110,731	\$114,398
Other Special Revenue Funds	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500

Fiscal Detail and Notes

This bill establishes the Hope and Inclusion Scholarship Program to be administered by the Hope and Inclusion Scholarship Board with the assistance of the Department of Education. It creates individual hope accounts which may be used by parents or legal guardians of qualified students to pay for the education of those students enrolled in private schools. This bill includes ongoing General Fund appropriations of \$75,524 in fiscal year 2023-24 and \$107,191 in fiscal year 2024-25 to the Hope and Inclusion Scholarship Program within the Department of Education for one Management Analyst II position and related All Other cost associated with assisting the board with administering the program. The bill provides that the board may receive up to 3% of the state subsidy attributable to the qualified student for whom a hope account is established to pay for the ongoing costs of administering the program. The amount to be received by the board each year will depend on the number of students that participate in the program. To the extent that the amount of funding received by the board from the 3% of state subsidy for each student for which a hope account is established is sufficient to cover the cost of the position within the department, General Fund appropriations may not be required.

The bill requires the Department of Education to deposit 90% of the state subsidy for each child approved for a hope account that would otherwise be paid to the child's local school administrative unit (SAU) into an account established for that child. The SAU of the child approved for the program is required to deposit 90% of its required local contribution attributable to that child into the child's hope account. The impact to individual SAUs affected by this requirement will depend on the number of students in each SAU that participate in the program each year. The Department of Education will require ongoing Other Special Revenue Funds base allocations of \$500 per year beginning in fiscal year 2023-24 to the Hope and Inclusion Scholarship Program to authorize the expenditure of funds received from the deposit of the state subsidy and the required local contribution. Expenditures include the establishment of individual hope accounts for eligible students and the ongoing costs to administer the program.

Additional costs to the Department of Education, the University of Maine System, the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous and Tribal Populations, the Office of the Attorney General, the Office of the State Auditor and the Office of the State Treasurer associated with serving on the Hope and Inclusion Scholarship Board are expected to be minor and can be absorbed within existing budgeted resources.