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Legislative Document

No. 1445

H.P. 1057

House of Representatives, April 2, 2019

An Act To Provide Debt-free Educational Opportunities for Maine Residents

Reference to the Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business suggested and ordered printed.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "R B. Hunt".

ROBERT B. HUNT
Clerk

Presented by Representative BROOKS of Lewiston.
Cosponsored by Senator MIRAMANT of Knox and
Representatives: CROCKETT of Portland, HANDY of Lewiston, HARNETT of Gardiner,
MELARAGNO of Auburn, SHARPE of Durham, SYLVESTER of Portland, TALBOT ROSS
of Portland, TEPLER of Topsham.

1 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:**

2 **Sec. 1. 20-A MRSA c. 441** is enacted to read:

3 **CHAPTER 441**

4 **DEBT-FREE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR MAINE RESIDENTS**

5 **§12941. Definitions**

6 As used in this chapter, unless the context otherwise indicates, the following terms
7 have the following meanings.

8 **1. Authority.** "Authority" means the Finance Authority of Maine.

9 **2. Eligible program of study.** "Eligible program of study" means a curriculum
10 leading to a baccalaureate degree, associate degree or certificate.

11 **3. Eligible school.** "Eligible school" means an institution of higher education as
12 defined in section 11611, subsection 5. An eligible school must be a public college or
13 university and includes the Maine Community College System.

14 **4. Eligible student.** "Eligible student" means a person who meets the requirements
15 of section 12942.

16 **5. Gift aid.** "Gift aid" means financial aid received from the Federal Pell Grant
17 under 20 United States Code, Section 1070a or any other source of merit-based or
18 needs-based scholarship that the recipient is not required to repay. "Gift aid" does not
19 include a grant awarded under this chapter.

20 **§12942. Eligibility**

21 There is established the Debt-free Educational Opportunities for Maine Residents
22 program, administered by the authority and referred to in this chapter as "the program."
23 Under the program, a grant may be given only to a person who:

24 **1. Graduated from secondary school.** Has graduated from a secondary school or
25 matriculated at an eligible school prior to high school graduation or has successfully
26 completed a general educational development examination or its equivalent;

27 **2. Accepted as undergraduate.** Has been accepted for enrollment as an
28 undergraduate or is in good standing as an undergraduate at an eligible school in an
29 eligible program of study and has not received a baccalaureate degree;

30 **3. Applied for grants.** Has applied for a grant under this chapter according to
31 schedules and procedures and on forms developed by the authority by rule; and

32 **4. State residency requirements.** Has been a state resident for at least one year. To
33 establish residency, the person must provide:

34 **A. Proof of attendance at a secondary school in the State;**

- 1 B. A driver's license or nondriver identification card issued by the State;
2 C. A tax return, W-2 form or paycheck stub;
3 D. A utility bill or a letter from a utility company showing application for service;
4 E. A contract to which the person is a party;
5 F. A document issued by a governmental entity such as:
6 (1) A United States Department of Homeland Security Application for Asylum
7 and for Withholding of Removal, Form I-589;
8 (2) A United States Department of Homeland Security Deferred Action for
9 Childhood Arrivals card;
10 (3) A United States Department of Homeland Security Application for
11 Employment Authorization Document, Form I-765; or
12 (4) Proof of T nonimmigrant status under 8 United States Code, Section
13 1101(a)(15)(T) or U nonimmigrant status under 8 United States Code, Section
14 1101(a)(15)(U); or
15 G. Other forms of acceptable documentary evidence of a person's residence or
16 domicile in the State that includes the person's name and the address of the person's
17 residence or domicile in the State. A post office box or other mail drop address is not
18 sufficient.

19 A person who is unable to provide acceptable documentary evidence under paragraphs A
20 through G may meet the requirements of this subsection by submitting the affidavits of 2
21 persons who have a personal or professional relationship with the person and knowledge
22 of the person and the person's residence or domicile, which may be a shelter, in the State.
23 A single affidavit signed by a parent or guardian of a minor making an application is
24 sufficient for the purposes of this paragraph.

25 All forms of acceptable documentary evidence must provide proof that the person has
26 been a resident of the State for at least one year.

27 **§12943. Grant awards**

28 Beginning in fiscal year 2019-20, the authority shall provide an eligible student a
29 grant under this chapter in the amount of the cost of tuition and other expenses related to
30 the cost of attendance at an eligible school, including the cost of room and board, books,
31 supplies and fees, charged to a student enrolled in courses leading to completion of an
32 eligible program of study on at least a part-time basis at an eligible school in which the
33 eligible student is enrolled, less any gift aid the eligible student receives.

34 **1. Length of grant.** A grant is for the cost of tuition and other expenses related to
35 the cost of attendance at an eligible school, including the cost of room and board, books,
36 supplies and fees, charged to a student for a period not to exceed one academic year. An
37 eligible student may apply for a grant each year during the period required for completion
38 of an eligible program of study being pursued by that student.

