

PLEASE NOTE: Legislative Information **cannot** perform research, provide legal advice, or interpret Maine law. For legal assistance, please contact a qualified attorney.

**An Act To Promote Independence and Facilitate
Employment for Visually Impaired or Blind Individuals
by Investing in an Effective Vision Rehabilitation System**

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

Sec. 1. Appropriations and allocations. The following appropriations and allocations are made.

LABOR, DEPARTMENT OF

Blind and Visually Impaired - Division for the 0126

Initiative: Provides funding for one full-time Vision Rehabilitation Therapist position in Rockland and 2 half-time Vision Rehabilitation Therapist positions in Bangor and Houlton, including support staff, travel and office equipment, all contracted through The Iris Network, to meet the vocational and independent living needs of increasing numbers of clients, to improve expanded core curriculum services for blind and visually impaired youth in transition and to meet established standards for client-therapist ratios.

GENERAL FUND	2009-10	2010-11
All Other	\$160,000	\$166,400
GENERAL FUND TOTAL	\$160,000	\$166,400

Blind and Visually Impaired - Division for the 0126

Initiative: Creates one additional full-time statewide Personal Adjustment Counselor position contracted through The Iris Network and funds shared support staff, travel and office equipment to provide adjustment-to-blindness counseling and related services.

GENERAL FUND	2009-10	2010-11
All Other	\$80,000	\$83,200
GENERAL FUND TOTAL	\$80,000	\$83,200

Blind and Visually Impaired - Division for the 0126

Initiative: Provides funds to create and fund a position at The Iris Network responsible for designing and managing a comprehensive system of center-based and community-based programs and services to meet the vocational and independent living needs of people with vision loss throughout the State,

HP0402, LD 564, item 1, 124th Maine State Legislature
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including services designed to meet the vocational and independent living needs of increasing numbers of adult clients and to improve expanded core curriculum services for blind and visually impaired youth in transition.

GENERAL FUND	2009-10	2010-11
All Other	\$90,000	\$93,600
GENERAL FUND TOTAL	\$90,000	\$93,600

Blind and Visually Impaired - Division for the 0126

Initiative: Supplements existing funding for the Maine Audio Information and Reading Service program operated by The Iris Network from studios in Brewer by bringing funding levels up from \$35,000 to \$70,000 in fiscal year 2009-10 and fiscal year 2010-11 in order to improve service by expanding to a 24 hours per day, 7 days per week broadcast.

GENERAL FUND	2009-10	2010-11
All Other	\$70,000	\$70,000
GENERAL FUND TOTAL	\$70,000	\$70,000

Blind and Visually Impaired - Division for the 0126

Initiative: Creates a vision rehabilitation therapy recruitment and professional education program at The Iris Network as a means of recruiting qualified professionals to fill open positions and aiding succession planning for impending staff retirements by funding on-the-job training and continuing professional education and training opportunities, including internships, scholarships and fellowships designed to recruit and retain highly qualified vision rehabilitation professionals to provide vision rehabilitation therapy and allied services throughout the State in order to meet the expanding need for vision rehabilitation services.

GENERAL FUND	2009-10	2010-11
All Other	\$90,000	\$93,600
GENERAL FUND TOTAL	\$90,000	\$93,600

LABOR, DEPARTMENT OF		
DEPARTMENT TOTALS	2009-10	2010-11
GENERAL FUND	\$490,000	\$506,800
DEPARTMENT TOTAL - ALL FUNDS	\$490,000	\$506,800

SUMMARY

This bill decreases the ratio of visually impaired and blind individuals to vision rehabilitation therapists to more appropriate levels and improves the effectiveness of vision rehabilitation services for the increasing numbers of adults with vision loss and expanded core curriculum services for youth in transition by funding one full-time and 2 half-time Vision Rehabilitation Therapist positions and one full-time Personal Adjustment Counselor position. The bill also provides funding for a vision rehabilitation program developer to design and implement a vision rehabilitation system. The bill also increases funding for the Maine Audio Information and Reading Service operated by The Iris Network in order to support expansion to a 24 hours per day, 7 days per week broadcast. Finally, the bill provides funding to establish training opportunities, including internships, scholarships and fellowships, designed to recruit professionals to provide vision rehabilitation therapy and allied services throughout the State.