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Legislative Document

No. 1010

H.P. 748

House of Representatives, March 10, 2021

An Act To Establish the Maine Service Fellows Program

Reference to the Committee on State and Local Government suggested and ordered printed.

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

ROBERT B. HUNT
Clerk

Presented by Representative RIELLY of Westbrook.
Cosponsored by Senator BALDACCI of Penobscot and
Representatives: CARLOW of Buxton, CLOUTIER of Lewiston, Speaker FECTEAU of
Biddeford, MATLACK of St. George, RISEMAN of Harrison, WARREN of Scarborough,
Senator: MOORE of Washington.

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

2 **Sec. 1. 5 MRSA §7503, sub-§13**, as enacted by PL 1995, c. 54, §1, is amended to
3 read:

4 **13. Fund raising.** Carry out fund-raising efforts to supplement federal funding and to
5 meet all federal matching requirements; and

6 **Sec. 2. 5 MRSA §7503, sub-§13-A** is enacted to read:

7 **13-A. Maine Service Fellows Program.** Develop and administer the Maine Service
8 Fellows Program under section 7506; and

9 **Sec. 3. 5 MRSA §7506** is enacted to read:

10 **§7506. Maine Service Fellows Program**

11 The Maine Service Fellows Program, referred to in this section as "the program," is
12 established within the commission. Individuals who participate in the program are referred
13 to in this section as "program fellows." The commission shall administer the program in
14 accordance with this section.

15 **1. Program purposes.** The commission shall establish the program to:

16 A. Increase the opportunities for citizens to devote a year of service to communities in
17 the State;

18 B. Attract to and retain in the State motivated adults who have completed a college
19 degree within the prior 5 years to serve in positions where they can apply skills and
20 abilities to projects for the benefit of citizens of the State;

21 C. Provide rural and underserved communities in the State a resource to address critical
22 health and human, public safety, education and environmental needs; and

23 D. Strengthen civic engagement of both the program fellows and community residents
24 through solutions based in whole or in part in volunteer service.

25 **2. Program design.** The program must be designed to coordinate with appropriate
26 organizations in the served communities. Program fellows must be required to commit up
27 to 20% of their time in the program to developing regional networks of volunteer programs
28 whose common goals can result in mutual benefits. An entity may submit a proposal to
29 sponsor a program fellow based on guidelines established under this subsection. Services
30 provided by a program fellow may include but are not limited to services to address home
31 evictions, to support workforce development, to mitigate and prevent substance use
32 disorder and to promote mental health. The commission may identify other priority needs
33 of communities to be addressed by the program and may make those services available to
34 eligible communities. During the first 3 years of operation of the program, the commission
35 shall ensure that program fellows focus on helping communities recover from the effects
36 of coronavirus disease 2019, also known as COVID-19, and the related pandemic, while
37 also addressing long-term issues that communities face. The commission shall establish
38 guidelines for the program that include but are not limited to:

39 A. Limiting the eligibility of entities that may sponsor program fellows to local or
40 county government, school districts, nonprofit organizations, faith-based organizations
41 and similar entities;

1 B. Establishing standards for local sponsors regarding supervision and support of
2 program fellows during their service;

3 C. Ensuring that projects and project proposals are well-designed and measure their
4 impact and do not include partisan or political activity;

5 D. Ensuring that program fellows are not used to replace positions eliminated or
6 position hours reduced as a result of budget cuts by the sponsor;

7 E. Requiring criminal background checks or other safeguards if projects involve
8 working with vulnerable populations such as school children;

9 F. Authorizing private sector and local partner contributions to program operations for
10 travel reimbursements or training costs; and

11 G. Any other guideline that the commission believes will benefit the program.

12 **3. Compensation.** To the extent funds are available, the commission shall ensure that
13 program fellows receive the following compensation for service:

14 A. A stipend set by the commission to achieve an annual income of up to 212% of the
15 nonfarm income official federal poverty level. To the extent the stipend is paid from
16 the General Fund or any other account of the commission, personal liability insurance
17 and workers' compensation insurance, paid for from the same source of funds, must
18 also be provided. Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, program fellows are not
19 employees of the State for the purposes of Title 5, Part 20;

20 B. A program completion bonus that includes:

21 (1) Eligibility for the applicable in-state tuition rate for a program of study within
22 the University of Maine System, if the program fellow, within one year of
23 completion of service in the program, enrolls in such a program and is not
24 otherwise eligible for in-state tuition; and

25 (2) To the extent established by the commission by rule, an educational loan
26 payment in an amount up to 20% of the stipend value paid on behalf of the program
27 fellow to the holder of the loan; and

28 C. An allowance to pay for individual health insurance not to exceed 2% of the stipend
29 amount.

30 **4. Funding.** The commission may seek and receive both private and federal funds,
31 grants and gifts in support of the program. The commission may accept funding from other
32 state agencies to support program fellows whose work will support and promote goals of
33 programs administered by those agencies.

34 **5. Rules.** The commission may adopt rules necessary to carry out the purposes of this
35 section. Rules adopted under this subsection are routine technical rules as defined in Title
36 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

37 **Sec. 4. Program launch.** Within 180 days following the effective date of this Act,
38 to the extent of any available funds, the Maine Commission for Community Service shall
39 seek to establish in 2022 the first class of program fellows in the Maine Service Fellows
40 Program under the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 5, section 7506, consisting of 10 program
41 fellows who agree to participate in the program for up to 1,800 hours over a 12-month
42 period beginning in 2022.

