SP 717

ORDERED, the House concurring, that the Commission To Develop Strategies To Increase Postsecondary Access, Retention and Completion for Low-wage, Low-skilled Adults is established as follows.

1. Commission established. The Commission To Develop Strategies To Increase Postsecondary Access, Retention and Completion for Low-wage, Low-skilled Adults, referred to in this order as "the commission," is established.

2. Membership. The commission consists of the following 13 members:

A. Two members of the Senate, who may not be from the same political party, appointed by the President of the Senate;

B. Five members of the House of Representatives, of whom no more than 2 may be from the same party, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives;

C. One representative of a low-income advocacy group, appointed by the President of the Senate;

D. One representative of the Maine Educational Opportunity Center, appointed by the President of the Senate;

E. One representative of a public higher education sytem with expertise in financial aid and access programs, appointed by the President of the Senate;

F. One representative of a statewide organization representing the economic interests of women, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives;

G. One representative of a statewide organization with expertise in economic policy analysis, especially relating to challenges faced by low-wage, low-skilled adults, appointed by the President of the Senate; and

H. One employer with experience in, and who has demonstrated support of, educational programs for employees, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

The commission may invite the participation and input of the Commissioner of Labor or the commissioner's designee.

3. Commission chairs. The first-named Senator is the Senate chair of the commission and the first-named member of the House is the House chair of the commission.

4. Appointments; convening of commission. All appointments must be made no later than 30 days following the passage of this order. The appointing authorities shall notify the Executive Director of the Legislative Council once all appointments have been made. When the appointment of all members has been completed, the chairs of the commission shall call and convene the first meeting of the commission.

5. Duties. The commission shall study and make recommendations on ways to assist low-wage, low-skilled adults to overcome barriers to obtaining postsecondary degrees or occupational credentials to achieve the goals of improving the economy of the State and increasing the number of workers who earn a family-sustaining wage. In performing its duties, the commission shall consider:

A. The need for remedial or developmental education;

B. The availability of financial aid for nontraditional students that takes into account their need for flexible and part-time attendance;

C. The need for a financial aid package that recognizes the full array of education-related expenses that nontraditional students incur, including expenses for child care and transportation and lost wages as workers reduce their work hours to attend classes;

D. The need for additional resources for student advising and counseling to help students navigate academic challenges and social and economic barriers that affect attendance;

E. The alignment of related program resources in other departments of State Government to help students with access to postsecondary education; and

F. The design of program offerings, including modules, nontraditional hours and distance learning opportunities.

6. Staff assistance. The Legislative Council shall provide necessary staffing services to the commission.

7. Report. No later than December 5, 2007, the commission shall submit a report that includes its findings and recommendations, including suggested legislation, to the Joint Standing Committee on Labor and the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. Pursuant to Joint Rule 353, the commission is not authorized to introduce legislation. Upon receipt of the report required by this section, the Joint Standing Committee on Labor, pursuant to Joint Rule 353, may introduce a bill during the session to which the report is submitted to implement its recommendations on matters relating to the study.