

DATE: September 1, 2009

TO: Senator Bill Diamond, Senate Chair
Representative Emily Ann Cain, House Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs

FROM: Commissioner Laura A. Fortman
Maine Department of Labor

SUBJECT: The Initiative to Streamline State Government – Priority Programs

The Maine Department of Labor's General Fund Budget has decreased from a high of almost \$15 million in 2007 (\$14,994,259) to about \$11.4 million currently. All of our general fund dollars are dedicated to core mission which is: protecting people's safety and health, finding Maine people employment and providing training services for Mainers looking for work. Overall, we have 3 Bureaus within our Department with General Fund dollars, the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, the Bureau of Labor Standards and the Bureau of Employment Services. Other programs listed in the Maine Department of Labor General Fund Appropriations are the Maine Centers for Women, Work and Community, the Maine Labor Relations Board and the Office of the Commissioner.

The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) - General Fund Program Distribution (\$6,695,995)

The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services administers state and federal service programs for Mainers with disabilities. In addition to providing vocational rehabilitation (VR), independent living (IL) and related services, the DVR is accountable for oversight and coordination of state government compliance with federal ADA requirements. Each year, the DVR is able utilize general fund resources to leverage an additional fourteen million dollars in federal funds. **We did not meet the required federal match for Voc. Rehab in 2010 due to last budget cuts and we lost a 4:1 match for 2010. Maine will be \$300,490 short of the MOE requirement for 2010 making us vulnerable to being assessed a 1:1 penalty of that amount.**

The Division for the Blind administers state and federal programs for Mainers who are Blind and/or Visually Impaired, providing vocational rehabilitation (VR), independent living (IL), and related services including specialized education services for children. This program empowers consumers to participate equally in educational programs, job training programs and assist older blind consumers to maintain independent functioning in their home and community. Each year the division is able to utilize general fund resources to leverage an additional three million dollars in federal funds. We serve approximately 12,000 individuals with disabilities each year.

Bureau of Labor Standards (BLS) - General Fund Program Distribution (\$832,966)

BLS provides for the enforcement of labor laws, including wage and hour and child regulations and the enforcement of occupational safety and health standards in the public sector, as well as occupational safety and health consultations in the private sector. Currently we have 4 full time wage and hour investigators and 2 safety inspectors to cover the state.

Bureau of Employment Services (BES) – General Fund Program Distribution (\$2,286,312)

This program provides employment, training, placement and counseling services to help people find employment. The Maine Career Centers and the Maine Apprenticeship Program are the two programs receiving general fund dollars. The Maine Career Centers provide a variety of employment and training services at no charge for Maine workers and businesses. The Maine Apprenticeship Program is a training program designed to meet the specific needs of Maine employers through on-the-job training (OJT) and related classroom instruction. Apprentices usually find immediate employment in jobs with higher wages and offer career growth opportunity.

The Governor's Training Initiative coordinates and financially supports training for firms that are expanding or locating in Maine, reorganizing their work place, or upgrading worker skills. Training is customized to each employer's needs and timetable.

Maine Centers for Women, Work and Community (\$880,342)

This program provides job counseling, job training, job placement, and referral services to displaced homemakers in cooperation with the University of Maine. As you are aware, the Maine Centers for Women, Work and Community funding passes through the Maine Department of Labor.

Maine Labor Relations Board (\$491,544)

The Maine Labor Relations Board administers and enforces the state's laws that govern collective bargaining for public sector employees and employers. This includes Maine's cities and towns, school districts, water and sewer districts, the University and Community College Systems, Maine Maritime Academy, and all three branches of Maine's state government.

Office of the Commissioner (\$219,064)

This program includes the Commissioner's Office, whose responsibilities include review, oversight and coordination of all department functions. The Commissioner's Office is the primary liaison with federal and state agencies, the Legislature, the press and the public. It also includes funding for financial, human resources and facilities management services.

cc: Deb Friedman
Commissioner Ryan Low