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Legislative Document **No. 429**

H.P. 309 House of Representatives, February 11, 2021

An Act To Protect the Health of Students and Educators by Requiring the Establishment of Health and Safety Committees in School Administrative Units

(EMERGENCY)

Received by the Clerk of the House on February 9, 2021. Referred to the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs pursuant to Joint Rule 308.2 and ordered printed pursuant to Joint Rule 401.

ROBERT B. HUNT
Clerk

Presented by Representative McCREA of Fort Fairfield.
Cosponsored by Representatives: DODGE of Belfast, DUNPHY of Old Town, WARREN of Hallowell, Senator: DAUGHTRY of Cumberland.

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Emergency preamble. Whereas, acts and resolves of the Legislature do not become effective until 90 days after adjournment unless enacted as emergencies; and

Whereas, the spread of the novel coronavirus disease referred to as COVID-19 has created a public health emergency; and

Whereas, the Governor has declared a state of emergency due to the outbreak of COVID-19; and

Whereas, protecting the health and safety of students and staff in our schools is critical to our State at all times and is of particular urgency due to the ongoing outbreak of COVID-19; and

Whereas, the State has seen strong results from collaborative efforts between school boards, administrators and educators to create plans for safe reopening and operation of schools during the ongoing outbreak of COVID-19; and

Whereas, in the judgment of the Legislature, these facts create an emergency within the meaning of the Constitution of Maine and require the following legislation as immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety; now, therefore,

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

Sec. 1. 20-A MRSA §6307 is enacted to read:

§6307. Health and safety committee

A school administrative unit shall establish a health and safety committee in accordance with this section.

1. Duties; priorities. The health and safety committee shall coordinate planning and response to health and safety matters affecting the students and staff of the school administrative unit. For the duration of a state of emergency declared by the Governor pursuant to Title 37-B, section 742 due to the outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019, or COVID-19, a health and safety committee established under this section shall prioritize planning and response to health and safety concerns associated with the outbreak of COVID-19.

2. Membership. The health and safety committee must include as members:

A. Teachers and other school employees, who must make up a majority of committee members and must be selected by the local representative of the applicable collective bargaining unit if the teachers in the school administrative unit are covered by a collective bargaining agreement;

B. School administrators of the school administrative unit selected by the superintendent;

C. Members of the school board selected by that board; and

D. Parents of students attending schools in the school administrative unit selected by the unit's organized parent group or groups or, if no organized parent group exists, by the school board.

Sec. 2. Establish and convene health and safety committee. Each school administrative unit shall establish and convene a health and safety committee required by the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, section 6307 within 90 days of the effective date of this Act.

Emergency clause. In view of the emergency cited in the preamble, this legislation takes effect when approved.

SUMMARY

This bill requires each school administrative unit to establish a health and safety committee to coordinate planning and response to health and safety matters affecting students and staff of the school administrative unit. It requires these committees to prioritize planning and response to health and safety concerns associated with the outbreak of COVID-19 while there is in effect a state of emergency declared by the Governor due to COVID-19. The bill specifies that each committee must include teachers and other school employees, school administrators, school board members and parents of students.