STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
23 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0023

PAUL R. LEPAGE
GOVERNOR

WILLIAM H. BEARDSLEY
DEPUTY COMMISSIONER

April 21, 2016

Dear Blue Ribbon Commission Members:

Thank you so much for participating on the Commission. The stature of Commission members strongly suggests that, if we can find consensus on even a few higher order Maine Public K-20 education issues, we have the potential for arriving at grand bargains and follow-on action plans for transformative educational advancement in Maine. Government expenditures at all levels for Maine's public K-20 education system are now close to $ 3 billion per year. This is a very challenging, high stakes endeavor with very high potential rewards.

Attached is an agenda for our first meeting. Other information will be handed out at the meeting. The meeting will be held at the Blaine House on Monday, April 25, from 8:30 am until 11:30 am. If there are any questions, don't hesitate to give me a call at (207) 624-6620. I look forward to seeing you Monday.

Sincerely,

Bill Beardsley, Ph.D.
Commission Chair

Blue Ribbon Commission on Maine Education Finance and Achievement

Primary Focus: 1) Public Education Finances and Expenditures

"How do we more effectively and equitably raise and spend over $ 3 billion of local, state, and federal tax revenues per year for Maine's public K-12 and higher education?"

2) Educational Achievement

"What are Maine's overarching public K-12 and higher education student achievement goals and how do we better align them with Maine's prosperity and quality of life aspirations?"

Issues Mentioned in Law: See Appendix 1

Commission Outcome: A transformative grand bargain/action plan

Potential: Commission members, together, have the capacity to carry out substantive change where there is "consensus" on desired "outcomes".

1st Meeting: Monday, April 25, 2016, The Blaine House, Augusta, 8:30am-11:30am

Agenda

Opening Session

- Welcome by Governor Paul LePage
- Self-Introduction by Commission members
- Commission logistics with Bill Beardsley
- Overview "micro-briefings" (3-5 minutes) to establish a common base-line
    - Tax structures, revenues and sensitivity analysis with tax expert, Mike Allen
    - Maine demographic and economic trends with state economist, Amanda Rector
    - Maine's labor outlook by sector and education requirements with human capital expert, Paul Leparulo
    - UMS overview and analysis with Jim Page
    - MCCS overview and analysis with Derek Langhauser
    - Public K-12 enrollment, cost trends and sensitivity analysis with education finance expert, Suzan Beaudoin

Break

Follow-on Session

- Open session on identification of higher-order consensus outcomes
  - Develop/define/prioritize specific "consensus" outcome goals
  - Identify specific data/analysis needs for subsequent executive discussion, policy formulation and decision-making
  - Strategic discussion concerning future meetings

Preliminary Future Meetings:

Late May:	In-depth strategic discussions related to priority consensus outcomes and identification of follow-on information and analysis required with external expertise, as needed to bring closure
Late June:	Follow-on strategic discussions and initial formalization of a comprehensive strategic action plan
Late July:	Finalize and Release Preliminary Report
Fall Meetings:	Content and dates – TBA

Staff Support: DOE and other state agencies/UMS/MCCS/outside experts, as needed

Primary Contact: Bill Beardsley at bill.beardsley@maine.gov or tel: (207) 624-6620

Day-to-Day Assistance: Dede Gilbert at dede.gilbert@maine.gov or tel: (207) 624-6620

ATTACHMENTS:

- Enacted legislation establishing the Commission and outlining initial breadth and depth of issues to be considered
- Preliminary list of Commission membership, addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses, etc.
- TBA

ITEMS THE COMMISSION MAY TAKE UP

A. Evaluate the success and shortcomings of the current funding formula for kindergarten to grade 12 education and propose changes to improve the funding formula;

B. Identify the causes of increased per-pupil education costs and develop proposals to help local school districts contain increasing costs;

C. Examine the State's special education spending, including its impact on school administrative units, and develop proposals to ensure the State's special education spending addresses the State's needs;

D. Identify trends and disparities across the State in student performance in kindergarten to grade 12 and develop recommendations for improvement;

E. Identify best practices for integrating technology into teaching and learning and develop proposals for statewide implementation of the best practices;

F. Review the existing laws governing the process of school administrative unit consolidation and withdrawal and identify improvements that will help lower costs and improve outcomes for school administrative units;

G. Evaluate teacher compensation throughout the State for adequacy and competitiveness and propose changes, as necessary;

H. Identify state and federal mandates for school administrative units that result in increased cost to local property tax payers and propose options for how these mandates might be addressed;

I. Assist school board and municipal leaders in identifying opportunities to leverage state or regional resources in order to reduce local costs;

J. Review the use of federal funds by school administrative units and identify challenges associated with requirements of those funding sources;

K. Examine the preparedness of students in the State to matriculate to the University of Maine System and the Maine Community College System and develop proposals to enhance the ability of public education from kindergarten to higher education to prepare students in the State for the modem workforce;

L. Evaluate the adequacy and effectiveness of state funding provided to the Maine Community College System and the University of Maine System, the financial needs of each system and each system's tuition rates in order to develop a long-term strategy for the financial sustainability of each system;

M. Identify opportunities to partner with the private sector and private philanthropic organizations to identify opportunities to access additional resources to reduce the cost of public education and improve student performance in the State; and

N. Identify and evaluate additional issues that the commission determines might reduce the cost of education and improve student performance.

Blue Ribbon Commission to Reform Public Education Funding &

Improve Student Performance in Maine

April 25, 2016 Meeting

Micro-Presenters

Mike Allen, Deputy Commissioner of Finance
& Associate Commissioner for Tax Policy,
Department of Administrative & Financial Services

Tel: (207) 624-9570
Email: Michael.J.Allen@maine.gov

Amanda Rector, State Economist
Governor's Office of Policy & Management

Tel: (207) 287-2873
Email: Amanda.K.Rector@maine.gov

Paul Leparulo, Deputy Director
Governor's Office of Policy & Management

Tel: (207) 287-2872
Email: A.Paul.Leparulo@maine.gov

James Page, Chancellor
University of Maine System

Tel: (207) 973-3200
Email: jpage@maine.edu

Derek Langhauser, President
Maine Community College System

Tel: (207) 629-4000
Email: hpelletier@mccs.me.edu

Suzan Beaudoin, chief financial officer
Maine Department of Education

Tel: (207) 624-6620
Email: suzan.beaudoin@maine.gov