

## ***Bill seeks to boost interest in college***

By  
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**By Glenn Adams**  
The Associated Press

AUGUSTA - Taking a cue from a Maine high school, a Maine legislative leader is proposing a law requiring graduating high school seniors to complete at least one college application before getting their diplomas.

Maine is considering doing as a state what individual schools are already doing in several other states.

House Speaker Glenn Cummings's bill was a response to figures showing that Maine falls nearly 7 percent below the average rate of New England students who attain college degrees.

Cummings, D-Portland, said that even though Maine has boosted the rate of residents holding at least an associate's degree by more than 3 percent during the last six years, more needs to be done.

"By requiring students to complete a college application, we are really asking them to stop and take the time to think about college," the speaker said.

His bill, which was not yet scheduled for a public hearing, says that in order to receive a diploma, a secondary school student would have to complete at least one application to a college, university or other post-secondary educational institution.

Cummings got the idea from Poland Regional High School. Before the southern Maine school started requiring students to complete college applications, only about 35 percent of its graduate went to college. That number has more than doubled, said Cummings.

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The idea has been tried at schools in other states. In Texas, which is also trying to increase the number of students who go on to state colleges and universities, San Marcos High School seniors have to be accepted at Austin Community College in order to get their diplomas.

In Maryland, the director of college advising at St. Mary's Ryken High School in Leonardtown said he's in the process of proposing that every senior at the school apply to at least one four-year college or university.

Even though many students want to start at a two-year school and then transfer, David Hamilton at St. Mary's said he wants them to at least try for a four-year institution.

In Philadelphia, the small, independent Crefeld School requires seniors to do an extensive senior portfolio that includes a personalized transition plan and a college application. In rare cases, the grades seven-12 school allows students to fill out an application for employment instead, said Stacey Cunitz, director of admissions and college counseling.

Independent college admissions adviser Steven Roy Goodman of Washington, D.C., said he was unaware of any state requiring students to apply for post-secondary education.

"This is new," Goodman said Thursday. But he said some schools have to impose policies to slow down the wave of applications they receive from some students to ease the administrative burden of providing supporting documentation.

Back in Maine, a group of education, government, community and business leaders in the Compact for Higher Education, who want to raise educational attainment in Maine, are supporting Cummings' bill.

"Too many high school students simply don't see themselves as college material, but completing the application can open their eyes to their own potential," said compact Executive Director Henry Bourgeois. "Anything we can do to encourage students is a good thing."

Cummings' bill was referred to the Education Committee on Tuesday.

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