



129th MAINE LEGISLATURE

FIRST REGULAR SESSION-2019

Legislative Document

No. 647

H.P. 468

House of Representatives, February 7, 2019

An Act To Attract, Educate and Retain New State Residents To Strengthen the Workforce

Reference to the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs suggested and ordered printed.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert B. Hunt".

ROBERT B. HUNT
Clerk

Presented by Representative CLOUTIER of Lewiston.
Cosponsored by Senator LIBBY of Androscoggin and
Representatives: BICKFORD of Auburn, BRENNAN of Portland, COOPER of Yarmouth,
CRAVEN of Lewiston, DODGE of Belfast, INGWERSEN of Arundel, KORNFIELD of
Bangor, Senator: POULIOT of Kennebec.

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

2 **Sec. 1. 20-A MRSA §8614** is enacted to read:

3 **§8614. Welcome Center Initiative**

4 The Welcome Center Initiative, referred to in this section as "the initiative," is
5 established and administered by the department's office of adult education and family
6 literacy, referred to in this section as "the office."

7 **1. Welcome centers.** The initiative operates through a welcome center created
8 within the adult education program of participating school administrative units in
9 municipalities or regions in the State that have immigrant populations or that have
10 industries that are experiencing a shortage of trained workers. A welcome center
11 educates and provides vocational training for foreign-trained workers, including
12 foreign-trained professionals, and matches those workers with employers in the State,
13 focusing on employers in industries that are experiencing a shortage of trained workers.

14 **2. Coordinator.** Each welcome center under subsection 1 must employ a full-time
15 coordinator. The coordinator shall:

16 A. Administer the center;

17 B. Collaborate and work in conjunction with the department including the office to
18 carry out the purposes of this section, including developing a program or series of
19 programs designed to serve the needs of initiative participants; and

20 C. Secure additional funding from public and private sources, including donations,
21 grants or public-private partnerships, to provide ongoing funding of the welcome
22 center.

23 **3. Functions of a welcome center.** The functions of a welcome center under
24 subsection 1 include:

25 A. Providing services and training to prepare initiative participants for entry into
26 gainful employment in the State within 6 to 18 months of the beginning of services or
27 training;

28 B. Providing education and career planning case management;

29 C. Providing English language acquisition instruction;

30 D. Creating partnerships with employers in the State that may employ initiative
31 participants;

32 E. Identifying employment skills, academic skills and English language skills needed
33 for available positions with employers in the State in general or with employers in
34 paragraph D;

35 F. Collaborating with state and local organizations that provide employment and
36 workforce services and support;

37 G. Referring initiative participants to legal aid services; and

1 H. Collecting and analyzing data about the initiative participants.

2 4. Rules. The department may adopt routine technical rules as defined in Title 5,
3 chapter 375, subchapter 2-A to carry out the purposes of this section, including the
4 placement of a welcome center under subsection 1.

5 **Sec. 2. Department of Education to establish a welcome center in the City**
6 **of Lewiston under the Welcome Center Initiative.** The Department of Education
7 shall establish a welcome center within the City of Lewiston adult education program
8 pursuant to the Welcome Center Initiative under the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A,
9 section 8614.

10 **Sec. 3. Vocation-specific English language acquisition and workforce**
11 **training program.** A vocation-specific English language acquisition and workforce
12 training program for immigrants in the State, referred to in this section as "the program,"
13 is established.

14 **1. Program requirements.** The Department of Education's office of adult education
15 and family literacy, referred to in this section as "the office," shall administer a 2-year
16 program. The program must prepare immigrants for identified workforce needs of
17 employers in the State to accelerate entry into livable wage employment and enhance
18 employer retention of the immigrants by combining vocation-specific English language
19 acquisition with training in the specific vocational areas required by the employers.
20 Training classes must be conducted at a participating employer's workplace pursuant to a
21 grant process under subsection 2.

22 **2. Training grants.** The office shall establish a statewide competitive grant process
23 to carry out the purposes of subsection 1. The amount of a grant under this subsection is
24 determined by the office based upon the needs of the area to be served and the availability
25 of funding. The office shall consider grants to cover all areas of the State with emphasis
26 on areas with large immigrant populations or where there is a need for skilled workers
27 that training under this section may provide. A proposal for a grant under this subsection
28 must include:

- 29 A. Intensive vocation-specific English language and vocabulary classes;
- 30 B. Intensive workforce training classes that include soft skills and acquaint
31 immigrants with the culture of the workplace in the State. For purposes of this
32 paragraph, "soft skills" means those basic skills necessary to obtain and maintain
33 employment, such as interviewing and communications skills;
- 34 C. Interviewing immigrant participants and identifying the education level, English
35 language ability, skill set, work experience, qualifications and credentials of each
36 immigrant participant;
- 37 D. Collaboration with participating employers to:
 - 38 (1) Identify the employers' specific workforce needs;
 - 39 (2) Identify skills needed for positions required by the employers;

1 (3) Receive input from the employers for the design of the training, including
2 information on required English language proficiency, workplace culture, on-site
3 space or other vocational training elements such as tools, manuals or site tours;
4 and

5 (4) Ensure that the employers provide the time and space to offer training classes
6 on-site at the employers' workplaces;

7 E. One or more training courses to prepare the immigrant participants as potential
8 workers to enter into and retain livable wage employment within 6 to 18 months of
9 the beginning of the training; and

10 F. Collection and reporting of data including outcomes of employment and job
11 retention.

12 The office shall give special consideration to proposals for grants under this
13 subsection that provide incentives for immigrants to participate in the training, such as
14 agreements with employers to pay an employee the employee's hourly rate to attend the
15 training.

16 **3. Criteria for applicants.** An applicant for a training grant under subsection 2
17 must have demonstrated expertise and experience in the following:

18 A. Providing English language acquisition training, including the administration of
19 appropriate academic and vocational assessments and research-based instructional
20 approaches appropriate for English language learners;

21 B. Working with employers to develop relevant employee training; and

22 C. Working with partners in the state workforce and state agencies with expertise in
23 serving and preparing immigrants for employment through a case management
24 approach.

25 **4. Rules.** The office shall adopt routine technical rules as defined in the Maine
26 Revised Statutes, Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A to carry out the purposes of this
27 section.

28 **5. Report.** The office shall prepare a report on the training that includes:

29 A. The number and amount of grants awarded under this section;

30 B. The training and services provided by the grant recipients;

31 C. Aggregate demographic information about immigrant participants in the training,
32 participating employers, employment opportunities, employment placements and
33 retention by employers of immigrant participants placed under this section; and

34 D. An evaluation of programs and services most effective in carrying out the
35 purposes of this section.

36 By November 4, 2021, the office shall submit the report along with any recommended
37 legislation to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over
38 education and cultural affairs. The joint standing committee may report out a bill based
39 upon the report to the 130th Legislature.

1 **Sec. 4. Local community planning support program.** The Department of
2 Education's office of adult education and family literacy, referred to in this section as "the
3 office," shall establish a local community planning support program, referred to in this
4 section as "the program."

5 **1. Local community planning support program.** The office shall implement a 2-
6 year program to assist communities within the State to manage new immigrant
7 populations that have settled in the communities or to attract immigrant populations to
8 address depopulation or workforce shortages in the communities.

9 **2. Program elements.** The office shall establish by rule the elements of the
10 program. The program must provide a planning process for communities to provide
11 English language acquisition and training in vocational skills, identify employers or areas
12 that would benefit from immigrant residency or employment and cultivate community
13 support to integrate immigrants into the communities and local workforce.

14 **3. Funding.** The office shall consider applications from governmental entities
15 located in or containing communities that are affected by or wish to attract immigrant
16 populations and provide grants to those communities in a number and amount determined
17 by available funding. An application for funding under this subsection may be made by
18 one governmental entity or a combination of 2 or more governmental entities and may
19 include a partnership by the governmental entity with a private or nonprofit organization.
20 For purposes of this subsection, "governmental entity" includes a county, municipality or
21 school administrative unit.

22 **4. Rules.** The office shall adopt routine technical rules as defined in the Maine
23 Revised Statutes, Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A to carry out the purposes of this
24 section.

25 **5. Report.** The office shall prepare a report on the program that includes every
26 governmental entity receiving a grant, the amount of the grant and an evaluation of the
27 outcomes and effectiveness of the grant on the target communities. By December 5, 2020,
28 the department shall submit the report along with any recommended legislation to the
29 joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over education and
30 cultural affairs. The joint standing committee may report out a bill based upon the report
31 to the 130th Legislature.

32 **Sec. 5. Department of Education to provide grants for English language**
33 **acquisition instruction for adult education programs.** The Department of
34 Education's office of adult education and family literacy shall develop and implement a
35 grant process to provide funding on a competitive basis to adult education programs in
36 communities experiencing an increase in immigrant populations or demand to reduce the
37 waiting list for English language acquisition classes and to increase the level of English
38 language acquisition instruction offered as needed by the communities applying for the
39 grants. The department shall award grants under this section to eligible communities in a
40 number and amount determined by available funding. The department shall adopt routine
41 technical rules as defined by the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter
42 2-A to carry out the purposes of this section.

1 **Sec. 6. Appropriations and allocations.** The following appropriations and
2 allocations are made.

3 **EDUCATION, DEPARTMENT OF**

4 **Adult Education 0364**

5 Initiative: Provides ongoing funds for expansion of the Welcome Center Initiative within
6 the City of Lewiston's adult education program to attract, educate and retain foreign-
7 trained workers residing in Androscoggin County.

8

9	GENERAL FUND	2019-20	2020-21
10	All Other	\$150,000	\$150,000
11			
12	GENERAL FUND TOTAL	<u>\$150,000</u>	<u>\$150,000</u>

13 **Adult Education 0364**

14 Initiative: Provides ongoing funds for the New Mainers Resource Center within the City
15 of Portland's adult education program to assist foreign-trained professionals.

16

17	GENERAL FUND	2019-20	2020-21
18	All Other	\$150,000	\$150,000
19			
20	GENERAL FUND TOTAL	<u>\$150,000</u>	<u>\$150,000</u>

21 **Adult Education 0364**

22 Initiative: Provides one-time funds for grants for proposed welcome centers.

23

24	GENERAL FUND	2019-20	2020-21
25	All Other	\$50,000	\$50,000
26			
27	GENERAL FUND TOTAL	<u>\$50,000</u>	<u>\$50,000</u>

28 **Adult Education 0364**

29 Initiative: Provides funds for grants to adult education programs to increase English
30 language acquisition instruction in communities experiencing an increase in immigrant
31 populations or demand, which will serve 800 participants in both fiscal years of the
32 biennium.

33

34	GENERAL FUND	2019-20	2020-21
35	All Other	\$600,000	\$600,000
36			
37	GENERAL FUND TOTAL	<u>\$600,000</u>	<u>\$600,000</u>

1 2. It directs the Department of Education's office of adult education and family
2 literacy to:

3 A. Administer a vocation-specific English language acquisition and workforce
4 training program for immigrants in the State and establish a statewide competitive
5 grant process to carry out the purposes of the program;

6 B. Establish and implement a local community planning support program to provide
7 a planning process for communities to provide English language acquisition and
8 training in vocational skills, identify employers or areas that would benefit from
9 immigrant residency or employment and cultivate community support to integrate
10 immigrants into the communities and local workforce. The office must establish a
11 grant process to carry out the purposes of the program; and

12 C. Develop and implement a grant process to award grants to adult education
13 programs to increase English language acquisition instruction.

14 The bill provides funding for the vocation-specific English language acquisition and
15 workforce training program, the local community planning support program and grants to
16 increase English language acquisition instruction; and

17 3. It directs the Department of Education to establish a welcome center under the
18 Welcome Center Initiative within the City of Lewiston's adult education program to
19 attract, educate and retain in employment foreign-trained workers, patterned after the
20 New Mainers Resource Center in Portland, and provides funding for that purpose. It also
21 provides ongoing funding for the New Mainers Resource Center in Portland.