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Legislative Document

No. 1329

H.P. 981

House of Representatives, March 30, 2021

An Act To Establish the Career Advancement and Navigation Initiative in the Department of Education To Lower Barriers to Career Advancement

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

ROBERT B. HUNT
Clerk

Presented by Representative TALBOT ROSS of Portland. Cosponsored by Representatives: CLOUTIER of Lewiston, CUDDY of Winterport, RIELLY of Westbrook, TEPLER of Topsham, Senator: BAILEY of York.

3 4	1-A. Adult education hub. "Adult education hub" or "hub" means a group of local adult education providers located within a geographic area specified by the commissioner.
5	Sec. 2. 20-A MRSA §8601-A, sub-§2-B is enacted to read:
6 7 8	2-B. Career advancement and navigation specialist. "Career advancement and navigation specialist" or "specialist" means a person employed by the department under the initiative to help participants access education and training and obtain employment.
9	Sec. 3. 20-A MRSA §8601-A, sub-§4-A is enacted to read:
10 11	4-A. Initiative. "Initiative" means the Career Advancement and Navigation Initiative established in section 8614.
12	Sec. 4. 20-A MRSA §8601-A, sub-§6-A is enacted to read:
13 14	6-A. Office. "Office" means the office within the department that coordinates adult education programs and services.
15	Sec. 5. 20-A MRSA §8601-A, sub-§7-A is enacted to read:
16 17	7-A. Participant. "Participant" means an individual participating in or receiving services through the initiative.
18	Sec. 6. 20-A MRSA §8614 is enacted to read:
19	§8614. Career Advancement and Navigation Initiative
20 21 22 23	The Career Advancement and Navigation Initiative is established in the department to provide educational and career guidance, support and services to help underemployed and unemployed individuals acquire education, skills, licensure or other preparation needed to participate to their fullest potential in the workforce.
24 25 26 27 28 29	1. Administration. The office shall administer the initiative through career advancement and navigation specialists employed by the department. The office shall collect and analyze aggregate data about participants, including, but not limited to, participant demographics, engagement in classes, trainings and other services accessed directly or by referral under the initiative and employment outcomes following participation.
30	2. Career advancement and navigation specialist duties. Career advancement and
31 32 33 34	navigation specialists shall collaborate and partner with public and private sector entities to develop and implement the initiative and shall deliver and coordinate services for participants through adult education hubs in accordance with this subsection. Duties of career advancement and navigation specialists include, but are not limited, to:
35	A. Collaborating with the department, the office and other state agencies, including,
36 37 38 39	but not limited to, the Department of Labor, the Department of Professional and Financial Regulation, the Department of Economic and Community Development and the Department of Health and Human Services, to develop a program or set of programs to serve the needs of participants and carry out the purposes of this section;

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

Sec. 1. 20-A MRSA §8601-A, sub-§1-A is enacted to read:

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1	B. Creating partnerships with private employers and industry-specific trade
2	associations in the State including, but not limited to, employers and associations in
3	industries identified by the Department of Labor as paying high wages or having high
4	workforce demand, and collaborating with these private sector partners to:
5	(1) Identify the employer and industry-specific workforce needs and corresponding
6	skills, including job skills, academic skills and English language proficiency
7	required by employers in the State; and
8	(2) Design appropriate training classes to address identified needs, which may
9	include, but are not limited to, training in workplace culture, on-site training or
10	other vocational training elements, and contextualized skills or industry-specific
11	English language acquisition instruction;
12	C. Creating partnerships with state and local government agencies or other
13	organizations that provide employment and workforce services and support to address
14	participants' needs related to occupational licensure and credentialing;
15	D. Providing direct services and assistance to participants, including, but not limited
16	<u>to:</u>
17	(1) Guidance and assistance accessing appropriate education and training to
18	prepare for entry into gainful employment within 12 to 24 months of the beginning
19	of the education or training. Such training may include intensive workforce
20	preparation classes that cover habits of work, workplace culture and basic skills
21	necessary to obtain, maintain and advance in employment;
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23	(2) Assessment, career planning and case management services, including services
23	to assess participants' education and training levels, qualifications, skill sets, credentials, work experience, work-readiness and English language proficiency;
25	(3) Assistance for participants who have limited English language proficiency or
26	who are foreign-educated, foreign-trained or foreign-experienced workers to
27	<u>facilitate:</u>
28	(a) Enrollment in English language acquisition instruction, including industry-
29	specific English language and vocabulary classes to meet the needs both of
30	initiative participants and of employers; and
31	(b) Obtaining English translations and equivalency evaluations of educational
32	credentials, references and other evidence of skills, training and experience
33	acquired abroad; and
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34	E. Referring participants to legal aid services to address any legal issues that pose
35	barriers to workforce participation and employment, when appropriate.
36	3. Service areas. The initiative, through the career advancement and navigation
37	specialists, must serve participants and adult education programs in specific geographic
38	service areas in accordance with this subsection.
39	A. During the first 2 years of the initiative, the career advancement and navigation
40	specialists shall serve participants in adult education hubs associated with the following
41	areas:
42	(1) Kennebec County;
⊤ ∠	(1) Remierce County,

- 1 (2) Androscoggin County and Oxford County;
 - (3) Lincoln County, Knox County, Sagadahoc County and Waldo County; and
- 3 <u>(4) York County.</u>

- If the needs for adult education hubs shift from the geographic areas listed during this period, the resources and services of the initiative must be aligned to serve regions where the need is greatest; and
 - B. In the 3rd and subsequent years of the initiative, the department may expand the initiative to serve additional adult education programs or adult education hubs, beyond those specified in paragraph A, to meet the needs of the State.
- 4. Rules. The commissioner shall adopt rules to carry out the purposes of this section. Rules adopted to carry out the purposes of this section are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.
- **Sec. 7. Report.** The Commissioner of Education shall prepare and submit a report to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over education and cultural affairs no later than November 4, 2022, regarding the Career Advancement and Navigation Initiative established in the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, section 8614. The report must include, but is not limited to: information regarding the services, trainings and referrals provided by career advancement and navigation specialists employed by the Department of Education; aggregate data regarding individuals participating in the initiative, participating employers, employment opportunities and employment placements of participants under this initiative; and an evaluation of programs and services most effective in carrying out the purposes of Title 20-A, section 8614. The joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over education and cultural affairs may report out a bill to the First Regular Session of the 131st Legislature to expand or amend the Career Advancement and Navigation Initiative based upon the report.

26 SUMMARY

This bill establishes the Career Advancement and Navigation Initiative within the Department of Education to provide educational and career guidance, support and services to help underemployed and unemployed individuals acquire additional education, skills, licensure or other preparation needed to participate to their fullest potential in the workforce. The bill also requires the Commissioner of Education to submit a report to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over education and cultural affairs no later than November 4, 2022, regarding the initiative.