

John Costin  
Kennebunk  
LD 471

Dear Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and Honorable Committee Members,

My name is John Costin, I own Veneer Services Unlimited. We make custom veneered products for the woodworking industry in an old mill in Sanford, Maine. I am writing to you today in support of LD 471 to expand intensive English language programs. Talk to anyone who works in construction, and they'll tell you about the labor shortage. I'm having a hard time finding workers just like everyone else. As a long-time employer in the field, I've seen it get more challenging and more expensive to find workers.

This isn't just a Maine problem. There's a national carpenter shortage. But it is a real problem for Mainers when the labor shortage makes the housing shortage even worse. We have some of the oldest housing stock in the country. It's no good when we can't hire the folks we need to build the housing Mainers need.

That's why I get so excited about solutions like LD 471. They're a win-win for companies like mine and for everyday Mainers. Expanding access to intensive English language programs that already exist through the UMaine system takes a solution we already know works and scales it up. The bill will equip the workers my company needs with the language skills they need to get to work.

I know firsthand how workers with stronger English skills can integrate faster, reducing costly training time and improving efficiency in the workplace. In my job postings for architectural woodworkers, I say that good communication skills are a must have. My employees need to be able to read, write, and collaborate with other workers in English. That's what this pilot program will prepare workers to do.

I know that skilled construction workers are coming to Maine, and I want them to be able to come work for me, not get stuck sweeping floors, or worse, not find any work at all. When folks can put their skills to use, they can achieve financial independence, pay taxes, and fill gaps in our economy. This bill is one way to face Maine's demographic challenge head on and ensure long-term economic growth and prosperity for all Maine people.

Most of us would move heaven and earth to provide for our loved ones, whether we're born here or have made Maine our home. By investing in Maine's intensive English programs through LD 471, we can make it a little easier for the employers struggling to find workers and the workers struggling to find work. Thank you for your consideration.

John Costin  
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