

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and Honorable Committee Members,

My name is Ashish Shrestha, and I live in Portland, Maine. I am writing in support of **LD 471**, which aims to expand intensive English language learner programs in Maine.

This bill presents a crucial opportunity to create greater economic stability for many new workers by providing access to better jobs and educational opportunities. It also promises to add much-needed diversity to Maine's aging workforce. By investing in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs, we can unlock the potential of these learners, enabling them to contribute both economically and demographically to the state.

I am personally invested in this issue as a social service provider passionate about reducing poverty and improving outcomes for families in Maine. In my leadership role at **CommonSpace**, I have seen firsthand how individuals seeking services and support can stabilize and thrive when they have access to the right resources. These resources empower them to eventually transition into roles as staff members or providers themselves.

In particular, within our programs that support English language learners, there is a clear and urgent need for more educational English language learning opportunities. Many individuals are eager to take the next step toward skilled positions, particularly as social service providers who can then serve their communities. This transformation is powerful, and I believe that expanding funding through this bill would support long-term stability for both individual workers and the broader workforce in Maine.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions.

With gratitude for your attention,

Ashish Shrestha

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