

Gwyneth Esty-Kendall  
Bangor  
LD 471

Testimony in Support of LD 471

Gwyneth Esty-Kendall

Concerned Citizen

March 3, 2025

Chairperson and esteemed members of the committee,

My name is Gwyneth Esty-Kendall, and I am here today as a concerned citizen of Bangor, Maine to express my strong support for LD 471. This bill is a critical step toward addressing Maine's workforce shortages, strengthening our economy, and ensuring that businesses and communities across the state thrive.

I have had the privilege of teaching English as a foreign language and working with immigrant and refugee populations. Through this experience, I have seen firsthand how transformative language acquisition can be. For individuals striving to build a life in a new country, gaining proficiency in English is not just about communication—it is about access, opportunity, and economic stability. I have worked with people who, once they overcame language barriers, were able to enter the workforce, advance in their careers, and contribute meaningfully to their communities. I know how powerful and necessary this work is.

Maine is facing a growing crisis in key industries such as healthcare, education, and the skilled trades. Employers in these fields are struggling to find qualified workers, and one of the biggest barriers for many potential employees is language proficiency. LD 471 takes a proactive approach by expanding English language programs, equipping individuals with the skills they need to enter and excel in these essential roles.

Investing in language education is not just beneficial for workers—it's essential for our businesses and economy. Employers across Maine are in dire need of a workforce that is both skilled and linguistically competent. By increasing access to English language programs, we create a reliable pipeline of trained individuals who are prepared to meet industry demands. This, in turn, leads to higher productivity and efficiency, as employees with strong language skills can integrate into the workforce more quickly, reducing training time and improving overall workplace effectiveness. Passing LD 471 is an investment in Maine's economic future. By supporting this bill, you are not only strengthening our workforce but also ensuring that businesses can grow and succeed. I urge you to vote in favor of LD 471 and help build a more competitive and prosperous Maine.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome any questions you may have.