



# Maine People's Alliance

Dear Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and Honorable Committee Members, my name is Rachel Ackoff, and I am the Campaigns Director for the Maine People's Alliance. Our 32,000 members stretch from Kittery to Fort Kent.

We stand in strong support of LD 471, "Resolve to Strengthen Maine's Workforce by expanding Intensive English Language Learner Programs."

For several years now, we have been engaged in efforts, alongside our union partners, to recruit workers to the construction trades. We have held career fairs to introduce our members to the building trades and at these career fairs hundreds of folks have come through the door who have the exact construction skills needed on the worksite but lack the English proficiency they need to go to work. We have held multiple listening sessions for the new workers who have been hired into the trades to understand challenges to retention, and we have heard again and again how significant the challenge of language barriers can be.

So when the coalition that we are a part of heard that the UMaine system has a world class intensive English institute and that the staff there would be thrilled to work together to make the program accessible to more working people and the employers who need them, we were excited to advocate for this commonsense solution.

Whether our members are Black or white, Asian or Latino, Native or newcomer, they all strive to put food on the table and support their families. We look forward to working with you to ensure that all Mainers have the freedom to prosper, the way life should be ☺