

Christine Hayashida
Yarmouth
LD 471

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and honorable committee members, my name is Christine Hayashida. I live and work in Yarmouth. I am writing in support of LD 471 to expand intensive English language learner programs in Maine due to their positive impact on immigrant financial independence and workforce gaps. I am the Human Services Coordinator for the town of Yarmouth. I administer general assistance as well as other social welfare programs for the town. In the last 2 years, I have assisted over 80 immigrants. I have repeatedly seen first-hand how my clients who utilize our English language classes are able to attain jobs more quickly and no longer depend on general assistance. The jobs my clients have filled are typically in the healthcare field (CNAs, home health aides, and cleaners of healthcare facilities) as well as service jobs such as grocery stores and restaurants. These positions, particularly those in healthcare, help fill a critical gap in the workforce. I believe the most impactful variable in immigrant financial independence and employment is English language acquisition via (chiefly) in-person classroom settings. Learning solely on a cell phone or laptop has not been nearly as effective as in-person classroom learning with a teacher supplemented by self-led study. It is certainly a fraught time when an immigrant client is no longer eligible for GA because he or she has gained full-time employment, but more than anything, it is rewarding to the client and only benefits the immigrants themselves, their surrounding communities, and Maine's workforce. I ask that you vote "ought to pass."
Thank you for your time.