

To: Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs
From: Jennifer Kimble, Chair, Commission on Disability and Employment
Re: LD 46
Date: March 4, 2025

The Commission on Disability and Employment, a committee of the Maine State Workforce Board, The Commission was established by the legislature in 1997 and promotes collaboration with the public and private sectors to increase awareness and influence policy related to employment for people with disabilities. Its members envision a Maine workforce that includes all people with disabilities employed in jobs that meet both their economic and personal needs.

One goal of the Commission is to “advise, consult, and assist the executive and legislative branches of State Government on activities of State Government that affect the employment of individuals with disabilities.”

It is in accordance with this goal that the Commission writes in support of LD 46, “An Act to Establish a Grant Program to Increase Postsecondary Educational Opportunities for Students with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities or Autism Spectrum Disorder”

People with cognitive disabilities are much less likely than those without disabilities to be employed.

Nationally, 39% of adults with cognitive disabilities aged 18-64 are employed, compared to 77% of working-age adults without disabilities; in Maine, 40.7% of adults with cognitive disabilities are employed, compared to 81.9% of working age adults without disabilities.

[ADSC Compendium 2024 - Part of the 2024 Annual Disability Statistics Collection](#)

Participation in postsecondary education programs for students with intellectual disability in the US correlate with employment rates triple those of student without that experience.

<https://www.pacer.org/transition/learning-center/postsecondary/college-options.asp>

Despite their benefit, there is limited access to these types of programs. There is one program available in Maine for students with I/DD and ASD compared to the 29 accredited colleges and universities. Establishing a grant program is likely to increase postsecondary educational opportunities for students with intellectual or developmental disabilities or autism spectrum disorder. It would offer access to post-secondary educational opportunity for students with I/DD and/or ASD similar to Maine’s current opportunity for all graduating seniors to access two free years of community college.

Because of the robust data related to employment outcomes, and the importance of increasing the skilled workforce talent pool for Maine employers, the Maine Commission on Disability and Employment supports this legislation.