



YORK ADULT EDUCATION

30 Organug Road, York, ME 03909

April 30, 2025

To: Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

From: Heather Orr, Student Services Coordinator and Instructor, York Adult Education

Re: LD 175 - An Act regarding Adult Education Funding and Oversight

Thank you Representative SARGENT of York, Senator LIBBY of Cumberland and the others who presented this important legislation.

According to the 2022-2023 National Survey of Children's Health conducted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 28.9% of children between the ages of 3-17 have been told by a healthcare provider that they currently have ADHD, depression, or anxiety problems link: [Explore Mental Health Conditions Diagnosed - Children in Maine | AHR](#). As we all experienced, Covid did more than empty our classrooms in March of 2020; it derailed the lives of our students and has been discussed as one of the culprits for causing the increase in social anxiety for high school aged students. I know this because it is a front-and-center topic at almost every conference session I've attended this year, advisor meetings, and in general discussion among colleagues. Anxiety has led students to leave the traditional classroom setting and enroll in classes, 1-on-1 support, and sign up for the HiSET at York Adult Ed. Adult ed teachers offer more than just their expertise in content areas, they help students build their confidence, foster safe learning environments, and most importantly, meet students where they are and provide individualized learning experiences. This model is imperative for student success in those who have experienced anxiety.

At York Adult Education, students find more than an alternative path—they find a place where they feel seen, supported, and capable. With flexible instruction, compassionate teachers, and personalized learning plans, we create a space where anxious learners can rebuild trust in themselves and in education. This environment is often the turning point that helps them thrive.

Olivia is a student who has experienced a number of challenges that caused her anxiety in the classroom. Because of that, Olivia fell behind in school and with the support of her family, she enrolled in classes at York Adult Ed. Olivia has built strong relationships with the teachers; she attends night classes and meets with me one-on-one to reinforce what was taught in class and practice academic skills. Olivia has grown from being a reserved student to sharing out in class, writing impressive opinion pieces, increasing her independent reading, and is able to learn new math concepts quickly. There is no doubt that when Olivia turns 17, she will pass the HiSET test.

Taylor is a student whose anxiety pushed her away from the classroom and had a major impact on her attendance. At York Adult Ed, Taylor has earned two consistent attendance awards and we have watched her grow from a student who hid away in her sweatshirt hood to a student who enters the classroom with a big smile. Is there anything better than that?

James is a student who also experienced anxiety and missed a lot of school because of that. He struggled to feel comfortable or settled in class. James' CASAS scores were fantastic; he received the highest score possible on the math test and was one point shy of the highest score possible on the reading test. I remember thinking, maybe he also wasn't challenged enough in class? James' path was a little different; he had the academic skills but needed that person to just keep calling and getting him into the office to take practice tests and then the official tests. James started his adult ed journey in January and by mid-April he passed his last subtest.

Passing LD 175 would mean increased support, resources, and hope for our program and our learners. It would affirm that Maine recognizes the evolving needs of students whose mental health challenges require a different path to success—one grounded in compassion, flexibility, and personalized education. The stories of Olivia, Taylor, and James are just a few examples of the transformative impact adult education has when students are met where they are. LD 175 ensures we can continue this work—not just to help students pass tests, but to help them reclaim confidence, connection, and a future they can believe in.

Sincerely,
Heather Orr, M.Ed.
Student Services Coordinator
York Adult Education
27-363-7922 ext. 44115