

April 29, 2025

Dear Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and Members of the 132nd Legislature's Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

My name is Jeremy Lehan. I am the Director of Adult Education in MSAD 54, which serves the Skowhegan area. **I am testifying in support of LD 1705.**

I am in my sixth year as the Director of Adult Education after 25 years as a high school English teacher. I have found working in adult education to be profoundly rewarding. Adult ed programs can have an immediate impact on a learner's life by helping them to earn a diploma, secure a workforce credential, or successfully transition to a post-secondary program.

Learners like Michelle Bowden, who was featured in a DOE newsletter, benefit greatly from our services. Upon earning her diploma, Michelle secured a full-time job at Maine General with solid wages and benefits, after struggling for years as a single mom trying to make ends meet working as a PSS in home healthcare.

Local programs like mine work diligently to serve learners like Michelle. Yet in trying to juggle the varied needs of diploma students, Maine College and Career Access (MCCA) students, and workforce training candidates, we also confront the challenge of finding the funds to support staffing and other infrastructure.

MSAD 54 receives less than 60% of the subsidy we qualify for according to the state formula. If the proposed legislation were enacted, my program's subsidy would increase by approximately \$50,000. This amount would be transformative.

The increase proposed in LD 1705 will inject needed monies to help combat rising inflation, but, more importantly, the funds will allow us to expand our capacity to meet the need we know is there.

MSAD 54 Adult Education has only three full-time staff: a director, an administrative assistant, and one teacher. We also employ four other part-time teachers, and one part-time college/career advisor.

As a small, tightknit, largely part-time crew, we do our best to cobble things together for our students. I am proud to report that last year we served over 150 academic learners, awarding 39 diplomas, 24 workforce credentials, and aided over a dozen others in their transition to a post-secondary education. In addition, over 200 other people participated in our enrichment programming.

All of that said, I know that the demand for services in our area is greater than we can meet. **In Somerset County, the high school graduation rate is 91% as compared to the state average of 94%. Unfortunately, our dropout rate is the highest of any Maine county.**

In Somerset County current resources do not meet the demand. I am grateful that we have been able to leverage grant funds to help support some programming; however, there are often limitations and restrictions on how some of these funds can be used.

LD 1705 will also support continuation of the Career and College Success Coordinators at the community college campuses. With the surge of enrollments at the colleges, due in part to the state sponsored tuition, this support is critical in helping students to stay enrolled and complete their degree or training program.

I have witnessed firsthand the impact the CCSC's can have: Carolyn Haskell, the KVCC Coordinator, has been employed through my school district which served as the grant fiscal agent, and I have been her direct supervisor.

From July of 2022 to the present, Carolyn has had over 650 meetings with students to provided advising, transition services, academic support and more.

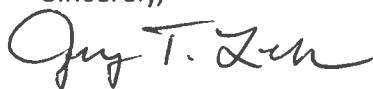
As one example of her success, the first multilingual learner she worked with will be graduating from the Radiological Technology Program in May. In addition to academic and success coaching, Carolyn assisted him with applying for the Competitive Skills Scholarship Program and sending in the necessary documents to keep the scholarship. This was key to his success, especially in this last semester when he needed a new laptop and didn't realize that the CSSP could help with this expense until Carolyn brought it to his attention.

Another student noted in her exit survey, "Carolyn was a HUGE help to me. She helped me navigate college without making me feel ashamed or judged. I may not have continued on my career path if it wasn't for her and her support."

I am hopeful that this committee and the legislature will recognize the key role adult education plays as a gateway to other opportunities. Please support following the existing formula to fully fund adult education and vote to continue the vital work of our Career and College Success Coordinators.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,



Jeremy Lehan

Director of MSAD 54 Adult and Community Education

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