



Testimony to support LD 1705 - An Act Regarding Adult Education Funding and Oversight

April 30, 2025

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

My name is Stephanie Haskins, and I am the Director of Gray-New Gloucester Adult Education. I have served those communities for 11 years in this capacity. In addition, I have served as the co-leader for the College and Career Success Coordinator position at Southern Maine Community College since its inception.

I am writing to express my strong support for LD 1705, “An Act Regarding Adult Education Funding and Oversight”, submitted by Representative Holly Sargent, which addresses several critical needs within Maine’s adult education system. I enthusiastically support the request that Maine fully fund the adult education subsidy at the level prescribed by law as well as the College and Career Success Coordinator positions at Maine Community Colleges.

Adult Education programs across the state play a vital role in helping Maine reach economic goals. Adult Learners can access academic, college and career supports, which include basic skills (reading, writing, math, digital literacy, English language acquisition) to pursue their career goals. While funding continues to stream to Community Colleges, it is important to note the vital role Adult Education plays in preparing adults for the rigors of community college. Adult Education is often the first step for many learners who don’t have the skills and or confidence to enter community college or a training program.

Maine Adult Education programs are highly accessible, with more than 70 locations across the state, and provide the basic skills learners need to obtain a credential of value and help our state develop a skilled workforce. Local districts contribute significantly to adult education programs in the form of local tax dollars and space to operate. It is time our state recognizes the value these programs add to achieving our economic goals. My small program alone has awarded more than 170 Certified Clinical Medical Assistant Certifications and more than 50 Maine State Certified Nursing Assistant credentials since August of 2020. These learners have all increased their employability, are now earning a livable wage, and many have continued to further their education. Additional funding would allow my program to better serve learners by increasing our instructional availability and attracting and retaining high quality educators. Meeting funding obligations to Adult Education directly impacts our state economy by helping build a skilled workforce.

Additionally, this bill asks for state funding for the College and Career Success Coordinators (CCSCs)—a group of dedicated professionals hired by local adult education programs but based at each of Maine’s seven community college campuses. These coordinators are the vital bridge between adult learners and successful postsecondary transition.

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Local data from College Success Coordinator reporting has unequivocally shown that having an Adult Education contact on campus at SMCC has been of tremendous benefit. Compiling data from FY24 of the SMCC Maine Jobs and Recovery Act Success Coordinator showed 477 students were served. Of those 477 students served, 167 were referred from adult education to the success coordinator, 107 were referred to their local adult education programs to build the necessary skills to succeed, 122 were enrolled in SMCC as new students, 131 took one or more free adult education classes to develop skills and 30 were co-enrolled at SMCC while receiving adult education services.

Making referrals to partner programs to help reduce barriers to success is a significant part of the success coordinator's role. During FY24, 388 referrals were made to outside agencies to help support student success. The most notable referrals were 79 to the Scholarship for Maine Immigrants, 84 to the Maine Community Foundation, 57 to the Wildflower Foundation, and 45 to the Maine Educational Opportunity Center. Other notable agencies receiving referrals were TRIO, MCCA, USM, CLEP, UMaine, SMCC Social Work (Housing), and others. Connecting students to resources is invaluable in reducing barriers and helping them achieve their academic and career goals.

The demographics of students served by the College Success Coordinator also highlight the success of this program in helping those who are Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed, and new Mainers, as well as other historically marginalized populations. While the data collected doesn't explicitly detail some of those categories, it does provide a glimpse of the students served. Of students with completed intakes during FY24, 92.1% were from low- to middle-income backgrounds; 29.6% reported being unemployed, and 42.7% reported being underemployed. Additionally, 71.1% of the learners were multilingual, and 67.9% were Black, Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC).

The benefit of having an Adult Education representative located on Community College campus is apparent in the data. While this data represents one year of the program, it has been consistent since implementation. Not only have learners from Adult Education benefited from this liaison, but also learners seeking community college, who aren't ready for the rigor, have also benefited from referrals back to Adult Education. Continuation of this program in its full-time status will provide a significant benefit to learners seeking to increase their employability and academic skills.

In conclusion, I urge you to support LD 1705 to provide necessary funding to often overlooked learners in our state; learners who are poised to positively impact the economic growth of our state. This bill will strengthen adult education in Maine, empower our residents, and contribute to the economic and social well-being of our state.

Thank you for your time and commitment to Adult Education.

Respectfully,

Stephanie Haskins, Director, Gray-New Gloucester Adult Education