

Testimony in Support of LD 1705

Submitted by: Ander Thebaud, RSU 24 Adult Education, Director

April 30, 2025

Dear Members of the Maine Legislature,

I am writing to ask you to support LD 1705: An Act Regarding Adult Education Funding and Oversight. This Act supports the exceptional work that is being accomplished across the state to serve adults in basic education (including English language acquisition), high school completion, transitioning to post-secondary education, digital literacy, and workforce training for new careers and/or upskilling. Adult Education in Maine serves all adult learners, including many target populations: the under educated and under-employed, unemployed, New Mainers, justice involved, Veterans and recovery populations. LD 1705 provides the structure and framework to continue serving these populations effectively and efficiently and, importantly, to help build the much-needed workforce in Maine.

I have worked at RSU 24 Adult Education in eastern Hancock County for the past 15 years as a curriculum coordinator, advisor, and now director. I see the positive impact of our programs daily – in the classroom, in the workforce, and in the community. Many of our learners set the foundation to continue their education and training after completing a program with us. For example, one of our graduates earned her HiSET and her Medical Administrative Assistant certification with us, then went on to earn her Dental Assistant Radiography certification at UNE. She has been working as a Dental Assistant for three years and is pursuing her nursing degree. Adult Education provides a critical step in the career pathway.

For the past 18 months we have had the benefits of referring our learners interested in attending community college to the College and Career Support Coordinators (CCSC) at Washington County Community College (Aimee Morrison) and Eastern Maine Community College (Patricia Hayes). Based on the most recent data report from the CCSCs, Aimee Morrison has met with over 500 adult learners on the WCCC campus. The “warm hand off” of learners is key in enrollment and retention of often marginalized adult learners. The pilot program for CCSC positions has shown to be highly effective at supporting learners in not only starting but continuing their educational and training paths. Continued funding of these positions will support adults who are taking steps to enter the workforce and support the Maine economy.

Maine’s adult education programs have long been underfunded. Each year, our subsidy amounts are based on a “ceiling”, a percentage of the amount that we would receive if adult education was fully

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funded per state statute. Fully funding adult education would allow us to expand programming to help meet the needs of the state workforce plan by serving more adults in our communities. In FY24, RSU 24 Adult Education served:

- 53 learners in workforce classes, including 31 new healthcare certifications
- 39 learners in our College Transitions programs
- 39 learners in our high school completion program

In a recent survey, 82.4% of our learners who earned workforce certifications (primarily in healthcare) responded that they are earning more now than prior to earning their certification. These numbers speak for themselves; adult education provides community members vital access to help them build sustainable careers to support themselves and their families, which in turn results in growth and strength of our communities. The return on investment is significant.

I strongly encourage you to vote in favor of LD 1705; it is a vote to support access to adult education for all learners across Maine and help grow our communities and economy.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ander Thebaud". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ander" and last name "Thebaud" clearly distinguishable.

Ander Thebaud
RSU 24 Adult Education, Director