



**Holly T. Sargent**

625 York Street  
York, ME 03909  
(207) 358-4793

[Holly.Sargent@legislature.maine.gov](mailto:Holly.Sargent@legislature.maine.gov)

# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2 STATE HOUSE STATION

AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002

(207) 287-1400

TTY: Maine Relay 711

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*Testimony of Rep. Holly T. Sargent introducing*  
**LD 1705, An Act Regarding Adult Education Funding and Oversight**  
*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs*

Honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, I am Holly Sargent, and I represent House District 147, which is the town of York. I am here today to present **LD 1705, An Act Regarding Adult Education Funding and Oversight**.

As we all know, Adult Education plays a critical role in the State's workforce development strategy. Maine's current landscape consists of over 65 Adult Education programs, which provide a range of instructional services to help adults develop the skills for further educational opportunities, job training, better employment, and to realize their full potential as productive workers, family members and citizens.

Between July 1, 2023, and June 30, 2024, over 12,900 adult learners participated in Maine Adult Education programming in one or more of the following areas: High School Completion, English Language Acquisition, Foundational Math, College Transitions and Workforce Training and Development. Additionally, 972 Adult Education students earned a high school credential, and adult learners earned over 2,600 certifications and credentials of value in high demand career fields.

Maine Adult Education is a vital resource for multilingual learners throughout Maine. In 2023-2024, Adult Education programs served 6,365 multilingual learners, accounting for nearly 50% of students served. These numbers have been growing in recent years, as more multilingual learners turn to Adult Education for critical language services.

The goal for LD 1705 is to bolster Maine's Adult Education programs and support them in a manner commensurate with the important role they play in our economy. This bill takes a crucial step by directing the Legislature to fully fund Adult Education programs according to the funding formula that has been in statute since 2007. During the time that this funding formula has been on the books, the Legislature has never appropriated adequate funding to fully meet the statutory funding obligation. The first step in ensuring our Adult Education programs can be successful in educating and training our workers is to fully fund the programs according to the statutory formula.

In 2023, this committee passed a bill that included a modest funding increase for Adult Education, and also established a working group at the Department of Education (DOE) to examine the Adult Education subsidy formula (LD 258 – Public Law 2023 Chapter 412; Part RRR, Sec. RRR-2). DOE convened this working group, and it met seven times between April and June of 2024. The group determined that the way the current funding formula is implemented is neither fair nor meets the needs of all Adult Education programs in the State. Despite the modest funding increase for Adult Education that we passed in 2023, given current appropriations, Adult Ed programs are only receiving 59% of the funding they qualify for in the current statutory formula. Given the critical work Adult Education programs do, we should strive to bring this number up to 100%.

LD 1705 also seeks to shore up our Adult Education programs by putting into statute the Career Advancement and Navigation Program, which provides students at Maine's Community Colleges with academic support, advisory services, and referrals to community services. This program was initially established using American Rescue Plan funds and it has proven to be very successful during its two years of operation.

Lastly, this bill also requires the Department of Education to annually assess adult education needs in the State and submit a report to the Legislature detailing its assessment and recommendations.

I want to highlight a few key functions of Adult Education in Maine that make it so critical to our state's workforce development strategy. Adult Education programs provide:

- Workforce development training that prepares students for in-demand jobs.
- Adult basic education programs that help students gain the skills they need to succeed in the workforce.
- English language acquisition programs that support our state's growing immigrant and refugee populations.
- High school equivalency and diploma programs that provide a second chance for students who didn't complete high school.
- College transitions programming that helps students navigate the college application process and succeed in higher education.

These programs are essential to building a strong and skilled workforce in Maine, and it's critical that we provide the necessary funding and oversight to ensure their success.

Adult Education is more than just an education program - it's a lifeline for many Mainers who are looking to improve their skills, gain employment and support their families. It's a key component of our state's economic development strategy, and it's essential that we provide the necessary funding and oversight to ensure its success.

I urge you to support LD 1705 and provide the necessary funding and oversight to ensure the success of Adult Education in Maine. Thank you.