



April 22, 2021

Senator Daughtry, Representative Brennan and Members of the 130th Legislature's Education and Cultural Affairs Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of LD 1329 - An Act To Establish the Career Advancement and Navigation Initiative in the Department of Education To Lower Barriers to Career Advancement. This initiative is much needed in the State of Maine at this time to effectively reduce barriers for those adult learners who are the hardest to serve. Maine Adult Education is the "on ramp" for adults with lower educational skills to get back on track and become gainfully employed.

Hub 7 represents nine local adult education programs from Belfast to Brunswick in the Midcoast Maine Region. Hub 7 programming includes a wide variety of services, including working with students who have lower educational skills. These populations include new Mainers (ELL learners) located throughout the entire Hub but with a substantial population in the Brunswick Landing Community. Hub 7 also and serves two regional/local correctional facilities - Knox County and Two Bridges Jails. We need a navigator to help us customize training by meeting with local businesses that are hiring. We could then integrate this customization into our training to secure not only jobs more quickly for those in need but jobs that offer a livable wage and keep these people employed over time. There are considerable barriers involving access to education, transportation, childcare, and then appropriate workplace skills that can be overcome with a navigator.

LD 1329, which has been proposed, would help underemployed and unemployed individuals acquire education, skills, licensure or other preparation needed to participate to their fullest potential in the workforce. Currently, Maine Adult Education programs struggle to provide these services in the best way due to limited funding. LD 1329 will help Hub 7 continue to build employer partnerships across the region. It is our goal to continue this work but we need the personnel to make it happen.

Maine Adult Education programs are equipped to integrate basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics with sector specific training for a trade. Also integrated are those "soft" skills needed to attain and maintain a job, such as communication skills, personal presentation skills, safety and other more intensive workforce preparation skills that a person might need. Adult education can also integrate contextualized English language learning to those new to Maine and the English language.

Having Career Advancement and Navigation Specialists who are specifically employed by Adult Education Hubs ensures that each person hired works in the defined region and is evaluated by the directors of each region. Customization to regional employment needs will be a critical piece of this project. Hub 7 sincerely hopes the legislature will give serious consideration to this bill to help adult education continue to support and serve our communities.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

*Allen Lampert*, Director, Merrymeeting Adult Education