

Support Letter for LD 1329 An Act to Establish the Career Advancement and Navigation Initiative in the Department of Education to Lower Barriers to Career Advancement



Good Morning,

My name is Barbara Miller. I live in Winterport in Waldo County and I work as an Adult Educator for the Bangor School Department in Penobscot County which is part of the adult educational partnership in HUB 3 which includes Piscataquis, Somerset, and Penobscot Counties.

On behalf of the Maine MultiCultural Center in Bangor, I am speaking today in favor of passing this legislation.

I sit on the Board of Directors of the Maine MultiCultural Center as Chair of the Education Committee. I also serve as a member and community partner with Literacy Volunteers of Bangor and Welcoming Immigrant Neighbors-Bangor.

In over 30 years of teaching English Language Learners, I see a consistent struggle around the state for access to self-supporting careers. Many New Mainers face considerable cultural and linguistic barriers to navigating the various systems leading to job training programs.

They may lack the English proficiency to explain their credentials or have them reliably translated. Even when they have a profession in their country, oftentimes they need more English vocabulary and specific work culture training to be successful in their chosen career such as Healthcare.

Even if not all areas of the state are covered at this time, it would be a significant step forward to have a navigator to help guide students with their educational or career pathways by joining with community partners to plan more career or industry specific programs and explaining what the prerequisites are, preferably printed in more than one language or having translators readily available.

Many Adult Education programs have no school counselor or their Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages have only an English Language Arts background without the multicultural knowledge to successfully assist diverse students. We need guidance from the state and specialists in more Adult Ed programs in Maine to help fill the economic gaps in industry safely and at the same time to give foreign-born Newcomers access to meaningful training programs leading to professional level careers.