



April 05, 2023

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and Members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today. My name is Patti Saarinen and I am the Deputy Director of Workforce Services with Eastern Maine Development Corporation. I have been directly involved with job training and workforce programs for the past 40 years and in all that time there has been a connection with adult education.

I am providing this testimony in support of **LD 1367 - An Act Regarding the Funding Formula for Adult Education**. Adult education is a critical organization in Maine and it's important that it be adequately funded. While the money being asked for in this bill is only a start to move adult education to full funding, it's an important start.

Eastern Maine Development Corporation (EMDC) is the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) service provider for 9 counties across Maine. In Central/Western Maine, we work closely with many adult education programs including RSU54 Adult & Community Education, Oxford Hills/Nezinscot, Lewiston and Auburn, Spruce Mountain, Franklin County, Region 9, and Gray-New Gloucester. A major way we have collaborated is on employer-driven training; these trainings involve employer input for the curriculum and include everyone helping with marketing, assessment, selection, case management and placement. We have done cohorts in sectors such as healthcare, construction and culinary. We also work together to help individuals gain work readiness skills and participate in individual occupational training. Over the past 21 months we have enrolled 195 people utilizing 19 adult education offices across our 9 counties.

Through our partnership, we have seen many adults complete their HiSET (replacement for the GED), earn credentials and find meaningful employment. One such gentleman came to us as a dropout without a driver's license and limited work history. Working together we helped him complete the HiSET, get his driver's license and go on to get his CDL; he ended up with a steady, driving job. Another was an older woman from the Philippines who had work authorization but little work history, no license and limited computer skills. Through our mutual support, she got her license, improved her computer skills and enrolled in a Certified Medical Assisting class. She passed the class and national exam and is now working.

Above are just some of the stories that show how important Maine Adult Education is as a workforce and educational partner in the statewide system. Adult Education programs need to be fully funded so they can continue to help adults and disengaged youth gain the skills necessary for employment or to enter post- secondary education.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Patti Saarinen

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