February 26, 2020

To the members of the Committee on Appropriations & Financial Affairs and the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

Maine Education Association is in full support of the Governor’s supplemental budget, specifically the $2.4 million in one-time funds to local adult education programs in order to provide innovative grants for workforce development. An increase in Adult Education funding is long overdue in the State of Maine. There are 70 programs located in every corner of the state that are accessible to Maine adults. The focus of the state and the federal government has been on education that helps adults find employment. Maine will need fully-equipped adult education programs to get all adults back to work, as well as to upgrade the skills of our state’s current workforce.

Maine Adult Education program provide the following:

- **Adult Basic Education or ABE** - Adults who lack the necessary reading, writing and problem-solving skills to gain employment or higher education can access these services at a local Adult Education program. Often, adults who have had issues with traditional schools are fragile. They need support, encouragement and excellent teaching.
- **English Language Learning** - Adults who are new to the United States and who need language services can receive help with literacy, speaking skills, and translation of foreign degrees at their local Adult Education programs.
- **High School Credential Options** – Adult education programs offer the HiSET (formerly the GED) high school equivalency exam and/or offer high school credit classes to adults who wish to gain a traditional diploma.
- **Work Readiness Classes** - Businesses all over the state are asking for “soft skills” training for existing employees and those new to the workforce. Adult Education can offer these services.
- **Certificate Programs** - Certificate programs like certified nurse aide (CNA), certified medication aide (CMA), CDL truck driving, office skills management and many more are offered locally to Maine’s residents. These certificate programs are often the gateway for adults to enter the workforce and then to continue upgrading their skills and employability. Program offerings can be customized to meet community labor shortages.

Maine Adult Education programs need help in offering workforce programs in the following ways:

1. **Recruitment of Highly Trained Teachers** – Currently, 89% of Adult Education teachers are part time. Adult Education teachers, on average, are paid 30% less than K-12 teachers. Programs need the resources to recruit full-time teachers, especially in mathematics and science, who are highly trained. The goal is to reach hard-to-serve adults and move them through the levels of learning that will help them be successful in work and in life.
2. **Intensity of Program Hours** - Many programs are limited in the number of classes they can offer due to funding issues. Maine’s adults need access to a greater intensity of services.
3. **Investment in Technology** - Programs also need upgrades in computer hardware and software to maximize teaching and learning. Distance learning is also available in many programs; with monetary support, programs will be able to increase this option.

We hope that you support this work as Adult Education programs move forward as integral partners in workforce training.

Thank you.

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