

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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130th MAINE LEGISLATURE

FIRST SPECIAL SESSION-2021

Legislative Document

No. 1684

H.P. 1253

House of Representatives, May 6, 2021

**An Act To Strengthen Maine's Workforce by Expanding English
Language Acquisition and Workforce Training Programs**

Received by the Clerk of the House on May 4, 2021. Referred to the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs pursuant to Joint Rule 308.2 and ordered printed pursuant to Joint Rule 401.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R B. Hunt".

ROBERT B. HUNT
Clerk

Presented by Representative CLOUTIER of Lewiston.
Cosponsored by Senator CARNEY of Cumberland and
Representatives: CRAVEN of Lewiston, CROCKETT of Portland, DODGE of Belfast,
DOUDERA of Camden, RIELLY of Westbrook, TALBOT ROSS of Portland, Senators:
DAUGHTRY of Cumberland, LIBBY of Androscoggin.

1 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:**

2 **Sec. 1. 20-A MRSA §8614** is enacted to read:

3 **§8614. Grants to fund English language acquisition instruction for adult education**
4 **programs**

5 The department's office of adult education shall develop and implement a grant process
6 to provide funding on a competitive basis to adult education programs of school
7 administrative units in communities experiencing an increase in immigrant populations or
8 demand to reduce the waiting list for English language acquisition classes or to increase
9 the levels, frequency or intensity of English language acquisition instruction offered as
10 needed by the communities. The office shall award grants under this section to eligible
11 adult education programs in a number and amount determined by available funding. The
12 department shall adopt routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter
13 2-A to carry out the purposes of this section.

14 **Sec. 2. 20-A MRSA §8615** is enacted to read:

15 **§8615. Industry-specific English language acquisition and workforce training**
16 **program**

17 An industry-specific English language acquisition and workforce training program for
18 immigrants in the State, including training classes, referred to in this section as "the
19 program," is established.

20 **1. Program requirements.** The department shall administer the program. The
21 program must prepare immigrants for identified workforce needs of employers in the State
22 to accelerate entry into livable wage employment and employment advancement and to
23 enhance employer retention of immigrant workers by combining industry-specific English
24 language acquisition with training in the specific skill areas required by the employers.
25 Training classes must be provided and funded pursuant to a grant process under subsection
26 2.

27 **2. Training grants.** The department shall establish a statewide competitive grant
28 process to carry out the purposes of subsection 1.

29 **3. Rules.** The department shall adopt routine technical rules as defined in Title 5,
30 chapter 375, subchapter 2-A to carry out the purposes of this section.

31 **Sec. 3. Industry-specific English language acquisition and workforce**
32 **training grants.** The Department of Education's office of adult education, referred to in
33 this section as "the office," shall establish a statewide competitive grant process to carry
34 out the purposes of the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, section 8615.

35 **1. Training grants.** The amount of a grant under this section is determined by the
36 office based upon the needs of the area to be served and the availability of funding. The
37 office shall consider grants to cover all areas of the State with emphasis on areas with large
38 immigrant populations or where there is a need for skilled workers that training under this
39 section may provide. An eligible proposal for a grant under this subsection must include
40 provisions for:

- 1 A. Intensive industry-specific English language and vocabulary classes for
2 participating potential employees, including immigrants who have not yet received
3 federal work permits, newly hired employees and incumbent employees;
- 4 B. Intensive workforce training classes for participating potential employees,
5 including immigrants who have not yet received federal work permits, newly hired
6 employees and incumbent employees that include habits of work, including but not
7 limited to basic skills necessary to obtain, maintain and advance in employment, such
8 as interviewing and communications skills, and that acquaint immigrants with the
9 culture of the workplace;
- 10 C. Interviewing immigrant participants and identifying the education level, English
11 language ability, skill sets, work experience, qualifications and credentials of each
12 immigrant participant;
- 13 D. Collaboration with participating employers to:
- 14 (1) Identify the employers' specific workforce needs;
- 15 (2) Identify skills needed for positions required by the employers;
- 16 (3) Receive input from the employers for the design of the training classes,
17 including information on required English language proficiency, workplace
18 culture, on-site space or other vocational training elements such as tools, manuals
19 or site tours;
- 20 (4) For proposals by specific employers to train newly hired or incumbent
21 employees, ensure that the employers provide the time and space to offer training
22 classes on site at the employers' workplaces or, where that is not feasible, that
23 employers provide at no cost to participants supports such as transportation and
24 incentives to prioritize, encourage and facilitate employee participation;
- 25 (5) Unless participating employers can establish that they have already undergone
26 such training within the 12 months prior to the grant submission date, ensure that
27 within the first 12 months of participating in the program employers receive at least
28 12 hours of formal training on systemic bias and inequities and cultural
29 competency regarding bridging effectively across a wide variety of cultural
30 similarities and differences to help establish an inclusive workplace environment.
31 The office is not responsible for arranging for or providing this training; and
- 32 (6) Create industry-specific skills trainings in which small employers in a specific
33 sector can participate collectively where it is not practicable for them to offer
34 trainings as individual employers. These collective trainings need not take place
35 at a particular employer's workplace;
- 36 E. One or more training classes to prepare the immigrant participants as potential
37 employees to enter into and retain livable wage employment within 6 to 24 months of
38 the beginning of the training; and
- 39 F. Collection and reporting of data including outcomes of employment and job
40 retention.
- 41 The office shall give special consideration to proposals for grants under this subsection that
42 provide incentives for immigrants to participate in the training classes, such as agreements

1 by employers to pay an employee the employee's hourly rate while attending the training
2 classes.

3 **2. Criteria for applicants.** An applicant for a training grant under subsection 1 must
4 have demonstrated expertise and experience in the following:

5 A. Providing English language acquisition training, including the administration of
6 appropriate academic and vocational assessments and research-based instructional
7 approaches appropriate for English language learners;

8 B. Working with employers to develop relevant employee training; and

9 C. Working with partners in the state workforce and state agencies with expertise in
10 serving and preparing immigrants for employment through a case management
11 approach.

12 **3. Report.** The office shall prepare a report on the training that includes:

13 A. The number and amount of grants awarded under this section;

14 B. The training and services provided by the grant recipients or progress toward
15 establishing new programs to deliver the training and services;

16 C. Aggregate demographic information about immigrant participants in the training,
17 participating employers, employment opportunities, employment placements and
18 retention by employers of immigrant participants placed under this section; and

19 D. An evaluation of programs and services most effective in carrying out the purposes
20 of this section.

21 By November 4, 2022, the office shall submit the report along with any recommended
22 legislation to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over
23 education and cultural affairs. The joint standing committee may report out a bill based
24 upon the report to the 131st Legislature.

25 **Sec. 4. Appropriations and allocations.** The following appropriations and
26 allocations are made.

27 **EDUCATION, DEPARTMENT OF**

28 **Adult Education 0364**

29 Initiative: Provides funds for grants to adult education programs to increase English
30 language acquisition instruction in communities experiencing an increase in immigrant
31 populations or demand.

32 GENERAL FUND	2021-22	2022-23
33 All Other	\$600,000	\$600,000
34		
35 GENERAL FUND TOTAL	<u>\$600,000</u>	<u>\$600,000</u>

36 **Industry-specific English language Acquisition and Workforce Training Program**
37 **N255**

38 Initiative: Provides funds in fiscal year 2021-22 and fiscal year 2022-23 for grants to
39 service providers to provide English language instruction and vocational training and to
40 place immigrant populations in the State with employers in the State.

