



130th MAINE LEGISLATURE

FIRST REGULAR SESSION-2021

Legislative Document

No. 1329

H.P. 981

House of Representatives, March 30, 2021

**An Act To Establish the Career Advancement and Navigation
Initiative in the Department of Education To Lower Barriers to
Career Advancement**

Reference to the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs suggested and ordered printed.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "R B. Hunt".

ROBERT B. HUNT
Clerk

Presented by Representative TALBOT ROSS of Portland.
Cosponsored by Representatives: CLOUTIER of Lewiston, CUDDY of Winterport, RIELLY of Westbrook, TEPLER of Topsham, Senator: BAILEY of York.

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

2 **Sec. 1. 20-A MRSA §8601-A, sub-§1-A** is enacted to read:

3 **1-A. Adult education hub.** "Adult education hub" or "hub" means a group of local
4 adult education providers located within a geographic area specified by the commissioner.

5 **Sec. 2. 20-A MRSA §8601-A, sub-§2-B** is enacted to read:

6 **2-B. Career advancement and navigation specialist.** "Career advancement and
7 navigation specialist" or "specialist" means a person employed by the department under the
8 initiative to help participants access education and training and obtain employment.

9 **Sec. 3. 20-A MRSA §8601-A, sub-§4-A** is enacted to read:

10 **4-A. Initiative.** "Initiative" means the Career Advancement and Navigation Initiative
11 established in section 8614.

12 **Sec. 4. 20-A MRSA §8601-A, sub-§6-A** is enacted to read:

13 **6-A. Office.** "Office" means the office within the department that coordinates adult
14 education programs and services.

15 **Sec. 5. 20-A MRSA §8601-A, sub-§7-A** is enacted to read:

16 **7-A. Participant.** "Participant" means an individual participating in or receiving
17 services through the initiative.

18 **Sec. 6. 20-A MRSA §8614** is enacted to read:

19 **§8614. Career Advancement and Navigation Initiative**

20 The Career Advancement and Navigation Initiative is established in the department to
21 provide educational and career guidance, support and services to help underemployed and
22 unemployed individuals acquire education, skills, licensure or other preparation needed to
23 participate to their fullest potential in the workforce.

24 **1. Administration.** The office shall administer the initiative through career
25 advancement and navigation specialists employed by the department. The office shall
26 collect and analyze aggregate data about participants, including, but not limited to,
27 participant demographics, engagement in classes, trainings and other services accessed
28 directly or by referral under the initiative and employment outcomes following
29 participation.

30 **2. Career advancement and navigation specialist duties.** Career advancement and
31 navigation specialists shall collaborate and partner with public and private sector entities
32 to develop and implement the initiative and shall deliver and coordinate services for
33 participants through adult education hubs in accordance with this subsection. Duties of
34 career advancement and navigation specialists include, but are not limited, to:

35 A. Collaborating with the department, the office and other state agencies, including,
36 but not limited to, the Department of Labor, the Department of Professional and
37 Financial Regulation, the Department of Economic and Community Development and
38 the Department of Health and Human Services, to develop a program or set of programs
39 to serve the needs of participants and carry out the purposes of this section;

1 B. Creating partnerships with private employers and industry-specific trade
2 associations in the State including, but not limited to, employers and associations in
3 industries identified by the Department of Labor as paying high wages or having high
4 workforce demand, and collaborating with these private sector partners to:

5 (1) Identify the employer and industry-specific workforce needs and corresponding
6 skills, including job skills, academic skills and English language proficiency
7 required by employers in the State; and

8 (2) Design appropriate training classes to address identified needs, which may
9 include, but are not limited to, training in workplace culture, on-site training or
10 other vocational training elements, and contextualized skills or industry-specific
11 English language acquisition instruction;

12 C. Creating partnerships with state and local government agencies or other
13 organizations that provide employment and workforce services and support to address
14 participants' needs related to occupational licensure and credentialing;

15 D. Providing direct services and assistance to participants, including, but not limited
16 to:

17 (1) Guidance and assistance accessing appropriate education and training to
18 prepare for entry into gainful employment within 12 to 24 months of the beginning
19 of the education or training. Such training may include intensive workforce
20 preparation classes that cover habits of work, workplace culture and basic skills
21 necessary to obtain, maintain and advance in employment;

22 (2) Assessment, career planning and case management services, including services
23 to assess participants' education and training levels, qualifications, skill sets,
24 credentials, work experience, work-readiness and English language proficiency;

25 (3) Assistance for participants who have limited English language proficiency or
26 who are foreign-educated, foreign-trained or foreign-experienced workers to
27 facilitate:

28 (a) Enrollment in English language acquisition instruction, including industry-
29 specific English language and vocabulary classes to meet the needs both of
30 initiative participants and of employers; and

31 (b) Obtaining English translations and equivalency evaluations of educational
32 credentials, references and other evidence of skills, training and experience
33 acquired abroad; and

34 E. Referring participants to legal aid services to address any legal issues that pose
35 barriers to workforce participation and employment, when appropriate.

36 **3. Service areas.** The initiative, through the career advancement and navigation
37 specialists, must serve participants and adult education programs in specific geographic
38 service areas in accordance with this subsection.

39 A. During the first 2 years of the initiative, the career advancement and navigation
40 specialists shall serve participants in adult education hubs associated with the following
41 areas:

42 (1) Kennebec County;

- 1 (2) Androscoggin County and Oxford County;
2 (3) Lincoln County, Knox County, Sagadahoc County and Waldo County; and
3 (4) York County.

4 If the needs for adult education hubs shift from the geographic areas listed during this
5 period, the resources and services of the initiative must be aligned to serve regions
6 where the need is greatest; and

7 B. In the 3rd and subsequent years of the initiative, the department may expand the
8 initiative to serve additional adult education programs or adult education hubs, beyond
9 those specified in paragraph A, to meet the needs of the State.

10 **4. Rules.** The commissioner shall adopt rules to carry out the purposes of this section.
11 Rules adopted to carry out the purposes of this section are routine technical rules as defined
12 in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

13 **Sec. 7. Report.** The Commissioner of Education shall prepare and submit a report
14 to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over education and
15 cultural affairs no later than November 4, 2022, regarding the Career Advancement and
16 Navigation Initiative established in the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, section 8614.
17 The report must include, but is not limited to: information regarding the services, trainings
18 and referrals provided by career advancement and navigation specialists employed by the
19 Department of Education; aggregate data regarding individuals participating in the
20 initiative, participating employers, employment opportunities and employment placements
21 of participants under this initiative; and an evaluation of programs and services most
22 effective in carrying out the purposes of Title 20-A, section 8614. The joint standing
23 committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over education and cultural affairs may
24 report out a bill to the First Regular Session of the 131st Legislature to expand or amend
25 the Career Advancement and Navigation Initiative based upon the report.

26 **SUMMARY**

27 This bill establishes the Career Advancement and Navigation Initiative within the
28 Department of Education to provide educational and career guidance, support and services
29 to help underemployed and unemployed individuals acquire additional education, skills,
30 licensure or other preparation needed to participate to their fullest potential in the
31 workforce. The bill also requires the Commissioner of Education to submit a report to the
32 joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over education and cultural
33 affairs no later than November 4, 2022, regarding the initiative.