

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 25, 2017

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, and Education
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, and Education
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

As your Subcommittee considers the Fiscal Year 2018 Appropriations bill for the Department of Education, we urge you to adequately fund the Adult Education State Grant Program. Building on the increase in funding for Fiscal Year 2016, we ask that you continue to take steps to move adult education funding closer to the authorized level of \$649 million included in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, which passed Congress with overwhelming bipartisan support in 2014.

Adult education programs are a crucial component of ensuring our economic competitiveness. More and more, middle-class and family-sustaining jobs require education beyond high school. Yet, according to U.S. Census data, 14 percent of adults over the age of 25 have less than a high school diploma. The Program for International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) reported that an estimated 36 million adults in the U.S. have low skills – nearly one in six have low literacy skills and one in three have low numeracy skills. Furthermore, U.S. adults today perform at the same or lower levels than they did in the 1990s. These basic skills are not only related to economic and employment outcomes; they are also correlated to better health and social well-being.

There has been a long-standing underinvestment in adult education, with severe consequences. Adult education programs struggle to meet the demand for services. At current funding levels, the system serves only 60 percent of the number served in 2001 and only five percent of the eligible students nationwide. Spending on federal adult education has declined by more than 25 percent in real terms since 2002. If we are to remain globally competitive, we must invest in our adult education system.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act made important changes to the adult education programs, ensuring that adult education programs are aligned with job training and postsecondary education, supporting the professional development of adult educators, offering technical assistance for adult education providers, and strengthening the research and evaluation of best practices in adult education.

A meaningful funding increase would help leverage needed resources for adult learners. We urge you to work towards increasing funding to the authorized level of \$649 million for Fiscal Year 2018.

Thank you for your consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,

Jack Reed

Armed Brown

Dick Durbin

Tammy Duckworth

Shirley

Jeffrey A. Mankley

Richard Blumenthal

Tom Boddie

Mazie Hironaka

Deanne Shalton

Maggie Hassan

Bob Sanders

Angus Fing -

Kirsten Gillebrand

Chin Coan

Cathryn Cox Minto

FY18 Adult Education Funding

Read each pair from the top of the letter from left to right

Reed
Blumenthal

Brown
Baldwin

Durbin
Hirono

Duckworth
Shaheen

Whitehouse
Hassan

Merkley
Sanders

King
Gillibrand

Coons
Cortez Masto