

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 15, 2019

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:

Thank you for recognizing the urgent need to boost funding for the Adult Education State Grant Program in FY 2019. The increased funding will strengthen adult education programs and put more adults on a pathway to greater career opportunities and enhanced economic security. As your Subcommittee considers the Fiscal Year 2020 Appropriations bill for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, we urge you to continue to expand opportunities for adult learners and fund adult education at the authorized level of \$678.6 million included in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which passed Congress with overwhelming bipartisan support.

The need for strengthening the skills base for working adults continues to grow. Increasingly, middle-skill and sustainable wage jobs require education beyond high school. Yet, according to U.S. Census data, more than 22 million working age adults have less than a high school diploma. Moreover, an estimated 36 million adults in the U.S. have low skills with nearly one in six having low literacy skills and one in three having low numeracy skills.




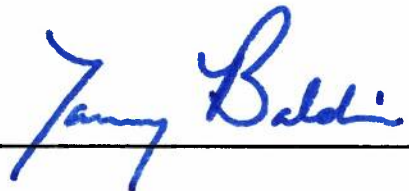
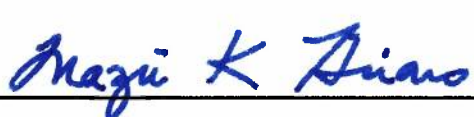





Adult education can make a transformative difference for these Americans. Adult participants in basic skills programs experience mean income gains of 53 percent over ten years, compared with an income drop of two percent for nonparticipants. Those who participate for 100 hours or more demonstrate a substantial increase in their literacy skills, are significantly more likely than nonparticipants to achieve a high school credential, and continue to improve their skills after program completion. Adult basic skill program graduates are far more likely than nonparticipants to enter postsecondary education and receive credits, as well as to vote in national elections. However, existing programs are able to serve fewer than ten percent of those in need, and two thirds of programs are struggling with long waiting lists.

Without robust support for adult education, the U.S. is at risk of losing the skills race to global competitors. According to PIAAC (OECD's Program of International Assessment of Adult Competencies), Americans lag behind the international average for basic skills in literacy and numeracy and "problem-solving in technology-rich environments." While other nations show consistent progress in increasing the education levels of their adult populations, U.S. adults have not made similar progress. The international Survey of Adult Skills (OECD, 2013) found that our average performance in literacy and numeracy was significantly lower than the international average.

Simply put, we cannot meet our economic goals without a significant and sustained investment in building the skills of working class adults. We urge you to work towards increasing funding for adult education to the authorized level of \$678.6 million for Fiscal Year 2020.

Thank you for your consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,

Jeanne Shaker

Elizabeth Han

J. Ray A. Mulley

Kyrsten Sin

G. M.

Edward J. Markey

Bar Sanders

Ang Klobuchar

Angus King

Cheri Coso

Paula Harris

Catherine Bay Marto

Dick Durbin

Maggie Hiron

FY20 Adult Education funding

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

Reed
Stabenow

Blumenthal
Baldwin

Hirono
Smith

Duckworth
Brown

Cantwell
Whitehouse

Shaheen
Warren

Merkley
Sinema

Murphy
Markey

Sanders
Klobuchar

King
Coons

Van Hollen
Cortez Masto

Durbin
Hassan