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March 13, 2020

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health, and
Human Services, and Education
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health, and
Human Services, and Education
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole:

Thank you for your support for the Adult Education State Grant Program in FY 2020. The increased funding will strengthen adult education programs and put more adults on a pathway to greater career opportunities and enhanced economic security. As you consider the Fiscal Year 2021 Appropriations bill for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, we urge you to continue to expand opportunities for all adult learners, including adult English language learners, by providing \$692 million for the Adult Education State Grant Program.

The need to strengthen the skills base of 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. Additionally, more than 40 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. These adults are less likely to be able to transition to higher-level jobs and more likely to be unemployed.

Adult education can make a transformative difference for these Americans -- economically and socially. Research shows that 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. The federal and state tax dollars realized through these income gains represent a significant return on investment for the average annual expenditure of \$1,021 per adult learner. Adult learners who participate in basic skills instruction for 100 hours or more demonstrate a substantial increase in their literacy skills. They are also significantly more likely to achieve a high school credential, improve their skills after program completion, and enter postsecondary education and receive credits, as well as vote in national elections.

Through adult education programs, participants develop the English language, literacy, numeracy, and digital skills they need to succeed and thrive in the workplace and the community. Unfortunately, existing programs currently serve fewer than ten percent of those in need, and many have long waiting lists. These programs also have limited ability to provide

supportive services -- such as job counseling, child care, and transportation -- that enable working class adults to persist in pursuing their educational goals. To enable these programs to continue strengthening American families and our nation's economic outlook through their vital work, we urge you to support increasing funding for the Adult Education State Grant program to \$692 million for Fiscal Year 2021.

Thank you for your consideration of this important request.



Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



John Yarmuth
Member of Congress

Adult Education State Grant Program in FY2021
List of Signatories
March 13, 2020

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