



### **Who We Are:**

COABE is the leading association for adult education, representing 79,000 adult educators and leaders around the country. Our teachers and leaders provide numeracy, literacy, English language skills, digital and information literacy, work readiness, soft skills, high school equivalency and numerous wraparound services to 725,000 adult learners nationwide. With over 2,200 WIOA Title II programs around the country, COABE members work tirelessly to help underserved adults master the skills they need to build better futures for themselves, their families and their communities, which in turn strengthens the economy by enabling businesses to fill in-demand jobs.

### **Funding Request:**

#### **Invest \$810 million in the Adult Education State Grants program in Fiscal Year (FY) 2024.**

- If properly resourced and supported, adult education can be the difference between failing to make ends meet and securing a family-sustaining wage, while ensuring employers have access to a pool of skilled workers.
- Additional funding is needed to meet the high demand for adult education and enable programs to best serve their students – in-person, online or in hybrid settings.
- Online and hybrid classes provide flexibility for learners who are often juggling work and family responsibilities while participating in adult education programs. Adult educators cite lack of devices and broadband as one of the top barriers to serving more learners.
- Investing in technology, capacity building and professional development is critical.
- If funding is boosted to a level that would better meet the demand and need, adult education programs can play a significant role in the country's economic recovery by providing millions of adult learners with necessary workforce and life skills, opening doors to opportunities they otherwise might not be able to access.

### **Policy Requests:**

#### **Support/Cosponsor the forthcoming, bipartisan Adult Education WORKS Act to be introduced by Senators Jack Reed (D-RI) and Todd Young (R-IN).**

- The reauthorization of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) provides a significant opportunity to improve the adult education system (which is authorized under Title II of WIOA).
- As Congress considers the WIOA reauthorization, we urge you to include the recommendations that COABE has developed, working closely with program directors, educators and learners, which are included in the Adult Education WORKS Act ([S. 5202](#) in 117th Congress). The Act would:
  - Strengthen coordination within the workforce system (i.e., Titles I and II) and ensure more effective use of resources by including adult education providers on state and local workforce boards;

- Increase employer involvement and partnership by promoting more Integrated Education and Training (IET), which connects adult literacy skills with job training so learners can quickly get the literacy, numeracy, digital literacy, and contextualized work skills to move into jobs that pay family-sustaining wages;
- Place a new emphasis on digital and information literacy skills that are so critical in the workplace and in everyday life;
- Expand professional development opportunities and invest in the professionalization of the adult education workforce (including by strengthening state certification policies, encouraging full-time staffing models, and fostering career pathways for adult educators) so more adult learners are taught by highly qualified educators;
- Enhance accountability through an innovative pilot to test out new approaches to measuring program performance and adult learner outcomes as well as small changes to the current accountability system to better capture adult education successes in the meantime;
- Leverage the facilities and staff of adult education providers and other community-based organizations as well as libraries to provide college and career navigation services; and
- Ensure that data collection on adult education program outcomes are consistent, accessible and reported in a timely manner so programs will have better information to improve their programs and practices.

**Support/Cosponsor the bipartisan Strengthening Research in Adult Education Act (S. 1268) introduced by Senators Jack Reed (D-RI) and Todd Young (R-IN).**

- To understand how to best educate and upskill our nation's [43 million adults](#) who are low-skilled in literacy and the [62.7 million adults](#) who are low-skilled in numeracy, it is critical that the work of practitioners, stakeholder and policymakers be informed by relevant, actionable and recent research in adult literacy.
- That is why COABE is advocating to improve research in adult education by:
  - directing the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) and the National Center on Education Research (NCER) to collect data and carry out research on successful state and local adult education and literacy activities that result in increased literacy and numeracy and educational attainment for adult learners, the characteristics and academic achievements of adult learners, and access to, and opportunity for, adult education, including digital literacy skills and information literacy skills development;
  - requiring IES to draw on the expertise of adult educators when developing policies and priorities; and
  - requiring that at least one research center focuses on adult education and literacy activities.
- All of COABE's Education Sciences Reform Act (ESRA) reauthorization recommendations are included in the bipartisan Strengthening Research in Adult Education Act ([S. 1268](#)) introduced by Senators Jack Reed and Todd Young.