

2024 ADVOCACY VICTORIES



Fought for Increased Funding for Adult Education:

Partnered with Congressional Champions to Safeguard Adult Education funding in Fiscal Year (FY) 2024. COABE worked with champions in the Senate, Senators Jack Reed (D-RI) and Todd Young (R-IN), and Representatives Grijalva (D-AZ) and Dan Goldman (D-NY) in the House, to ensure the FY 2024 Appropriations law, passed in March, safeguarded funding for adult education at a time when some other education programs saw cuts.

Boosted Support Among Members of Congress to Press for Increases in Fiscal Year 2025

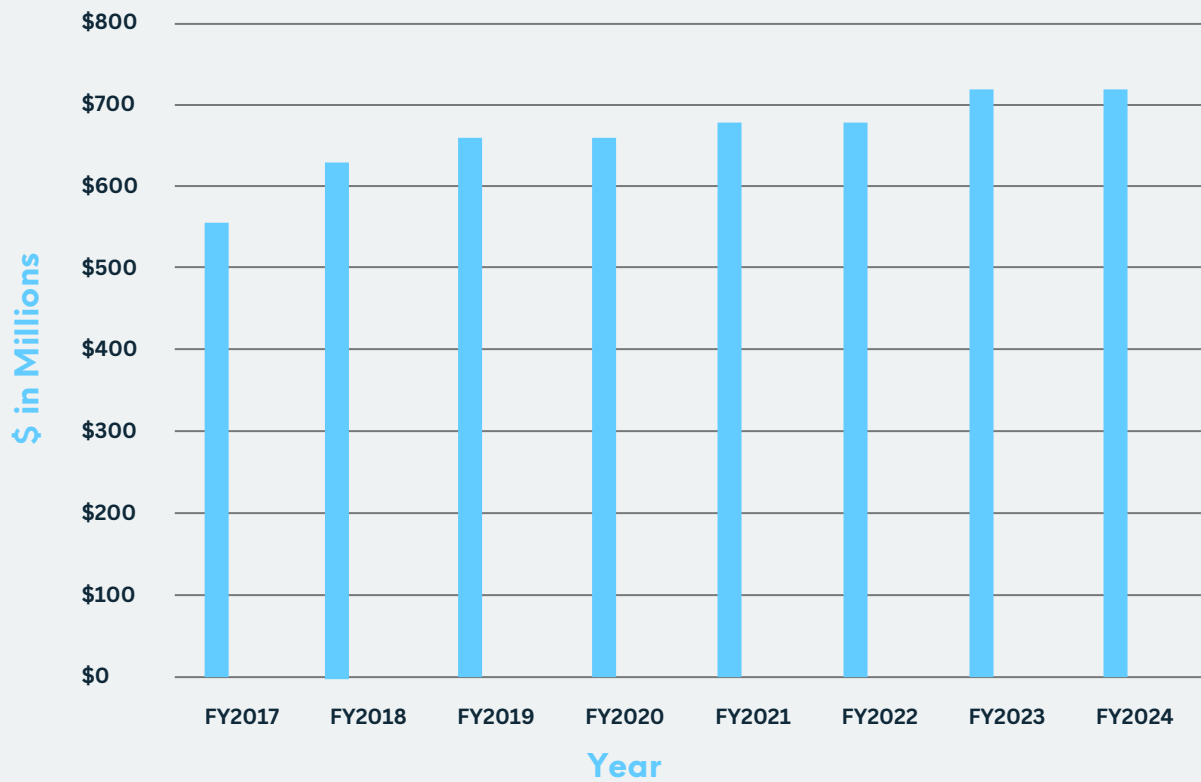
Appropriations. COABE supported the efforts of our champions in the Senate, Senators Jack Reed (D-RI) and Todd Young (R-IN), and Representatives Grijalva (D-AZ) and Dan Goldman (D-NY) in the House, who circulated letters in their respective chambers urging that the Adult Education State Grant Program be funded at \$810 million for FY 2025. Thanks to your advocacy, ten additional Members of Congress expressed support, representing a 20% increase over FY 2025 signers. The following Members signed on, with new signers this year noted in bold:

- Senate: Senators Reed (D-RI), Young (R-IN), Duckworth (D-IL), Hirono (D-HI), Murphy (D-CT), Padilla (D-CA), Peters (D-MI), Schatz (D-HI), Smith (D-MN), Whitehouse (D-RI), Blumenthal (D-CT), Klobuchar (D-MN), Merkley (D-OR), Stabenow (D-MI), Cantwell (D-WA), Hassan (D-NH), **Kaine (D-VA)**, Kelly (D-AZ), Luján (D-NM), Van Hollen (D-MD), Booker (D-NJ), Cortez Masto (D-NV), Bennet (D-CO), Durbin (D-IL), Markey (D-MA), Brown (D-OH), **Sanders (I-VT)**, King (I-ME), and Shaheen (D-NH)
- House: Representatives Grijalva (D-AZ), Goldman (D-NY), Davids (D-KS-3), **Davis (D-IL-7)**, Keating (D-MA-9), **Lynch (D-MA-8)**, McBath (D-GA-7), Panetta (D-CA-19), Pingree (D-ME-1), **Norton (D-DC)**, **Casten (D-IL-6)**, **Gottheimer (D-NJ-5)**, Hayes (D-CT-5), **Magaziner (D-RI-2)**, **Schakowsky (D-IL-9)**, **Garcia (D-TX-29)**, Carson (D-IN-7), and Pressley (D-MA-7)



Fought for Increased Funding for Adult Education:

Funding Over Time



Total increase between FY2017 and FY2024: \$133,500,000

To contextualize this data, the average funding per student increased from \$383 to \$583 over the same time period.

Drove Policy Changes:

- **Worked with Members of Congress to Garner Support for the Adult Education WORKS Act in the Senate (S. 3075) and the House (H.R. 5987).** COABE worked closely with adult learners, educators and program directors, along with COABE's longstanding Congressional champions – Senators Jack Reed (D-RI) and Todd Young (R-IN) – and new Congressional champion Representative Lucy McBath (D-GA), to garner support for the Adult Education WORKS Act (which was introduced in 2023). The Adult Education WORKS Act includes all of COABE's Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) recommendations. Additionally, Senator Tina Smith (D-MN) cosponsored the Adult Education WORKS Act in the Senate and Representatives Jill Tokuda (D-HI), Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR), André Carson (D-IN), and Jahana Hayes (D-CT) cosponsored the bill in the House.

In April, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 6655, A Stronger Workforce for America Act, on a vote of 378-26. The bill, which would reauthorize WIOA, included several policy wins stemming from the bipartisan Adult Education WORKS Act (S. 3075/H.R. 5987) that COABE worked to secure, such as:

- Ensuring additional resources are devoted to professional development for practitioners;
- Providing opportunities to professionalize the adult educator field;
- Promoting the use of integrated education and training programs (IETs); and
- Recognizing that adult learners need to gain digital literacy skills.

In June, the Senate HELP Committee released a WIOA discussion draft, which similarly contained several COABE-supported provisions to strengthen adult education. COABE advocated for more of the Adult Education WORKS Act to be incorporated into the bill. Additionally, COABE energized the field to advocate with the Senate and the House to include the remaining provisions of the Adult Education WORKS Act in a final WIOA reauthorization bill.





In December, the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee and the House Education and the Workforce Committee released a bipartisan, bicameral bill to reauthorize and make amendments to WIOA. Due to countless meetings COABE leadership held with Committee staff and your continued advocacy, This version contained several additional COABE-supported provisions from the Adult Education WORKS Act on top of the provisions that had already been included in the House and Senate WIOA bills. All told, the bill:

- ensures additional resources are devoted to professional development for adult education practitioners;
- provides opportunities to professionalize the adult educator field, including to increase the supply of high-quality adult educators, promote the development and adoption of full-time staffing models, and support for program quality standards and accreditation;
- recognizes that adult learners and participants in workforce programs need to gain digital literacy skills to be successful in today's workplace;
- encourages greater use of integrated education and training programs (IETs) to accelerate the acquisition of skills and training concurrently with education services;
- promotes the use of college and career navigators to help learners identify the skills, education, and training needed for postsecondary and work opportunities; and
- strengthens data collection and a more standardized reporting system.

COABE also sent a letter sharing support for passage of the bipartisan WIOA reauthorization bill to Congressional leaders. While this bill doesn't include all of the changes we hoped it would, it is a significant improvement over current law. Should it become law, we will be working hard to make sure the law is implemented in ways that support your learners and all the efforts you make on their behalf.

- **Collaborated with Lawmakers to draft WIOA reauthorization.** Since last spring, COABE has held meetings with Member offices on the Senate HELP Committee to discuss COABE's WIOA recommendations. COABE highlighted the needs of adult learners and the reasons for Congress to adopt our WIOA priorities included in the bipartisan Adult Education WORKS Act ([S. 3075/H.R. 5987](#)) introduced by Senators Jack Reed (D-RI) and Todd Young (R-IN) and Representative Lucy McBath (D-GA).
- **Collaborated with partner organizations to expand COABE's impact.** COABE collaborated with partner organizations such as the National Skills Coalition (NSC), National Coalition for Literacy (NCL), Campaign to Invest in America's Workforce (CIAW), and more to expand and amplify our impact by reaching broader audiences in letters to Congress and the Department of Education.

Remained at the ready should the Senate take action on the bipartisan Strengthening Research in Adult Education Act ([S. 1268](#)). COABE gathered input and recommendations from the field and then worked with Senators Jack Reed (D-RI) and Todd Young (R-IN) on this legislation to infuse adult education into the Education Sciences Reform Act (ESRA), the law that authorizes Federal research on education.

Specifically, S. 1268 would direct the Institute of Education Sciences 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 development; and require that at least one research center focuses on adult education and literacy activities. In December 2023, the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee approved [S. 3392](#), the Advancing Research in Education Act, on a 20-1 vote. While this bill, which includes COABE-supported provisions stemming from S. 1268, is not going to get over the finish line this year, we are gearing up to press again for these needed research reforms in the new Congress.



Represented Adult Learners and Educators in Stakeholder Discussions:

- **Brought Adult Education during Adult Education and Family Literacy (AEFL) Week 2024 to Capitol Hill.** COABE supported advocates across the country in meeting with key legislative offices to advocate for COABE's Federal priorities during AEFL Week in September of 2024. During this week of advocacy on Capitol Hill, COABE members conducted more than 45 in-person meetings with Congressional offices, including 16 meetings with Members of Congress. As part of these meetings, COABE was able to deliver Champion of Adult Education Leadership Awards in honor of our 22 Congressional champions. In addition, COABE hosted an AEFL Week Legislative Champions and Meet and Greet Breakfast, which featured remarks from one of our champions, Senator Jack Reed (D-RI), and a presentation of his award. Representative Norman (R-SC) also made comments and had a chance to talk individually with his constituent advocates. We were also joined by 8 staffers of Members of Congress, including staff of the Senate HELP Committee.
- **Arranged for Committee Staff to See Adult Education in Action and Better Understand COABE's WIOA Priorities.** COABE also helped arrange a site visit to showcase an adult education program in Washington, DC for staff of the Senators who serve on the Committee. At [Briya Public Charter School](#), participants learned about the critical role of adult education and saw firsthand how a well-funded and supported adult education program can provide multi-generational benefits, essential wraparound services, a complement of literacy skills, including digital and information literacy, and a pipeline to well-paying jobs. We continue to work to ensure that the experience of adult learners at Briya is not limited to one program. Throughout the visit, COABE highlighted the needs of adult learners and the reasons for Congress to adopt our WIOA priorities included in the bipartisan Adult Education WORKS Act ([S. 3075/H.R. 5987](#)) introduced by Senators Jack Reed (D-RI) and Todd Young (R-IN) and Representative Lucy McBath (D-GA).

- **Responded to the Literacy Report Released by Senator Cassidy, Ranking Member of the Senate HELP Committee (R-LA).** COABE provided [comments](#) in response to Senator Cassidy's [report](#), "Preventing a Lost Generation: Facing a Critical Moment for Students' Literacy." We shared relevant data and policy recommendations to urge the Senator and the Senate HELP Committee to focus on and invest in adult literacy in order to effectively address literacy in the U.S.
- **Activated the field to request AEFL Week proclamations.** COABE provided an [AEFL Week proclamation template](#) to the field with guidance on securing gubernatorial and mayoral proclamations. As a result, more than 120 proclamations were secured, an increase of 200% from 2023.

Supported Local Advocacy:

- **Provided a Template Letter for Members to Send to Their Mayors and Governors.** COABE launched the [Educate & Elevate America Pledge](#), a nationwide initiative to demonstrate to our legislators the vital importance of adult education. The pledge demonstrated to elected officials that their constituents want them to understand the needs of adult learners and educators and to prioritize adult education in their work. As of December, the pledge has been signed by over 3,000 individuals across the country.
- **Highlighted Adult Education during Adult Education and Family Literacy (AEFL) Week 2024.** COABE hosted a series of AEFL Week webinars with over 3,000 registrants. The AEFL Week Advocacy webinar alone had over 450 registrants. Additionally, more than 460 AEFL Week events occurred across the country, as represented on COABE's [AEFL Week Padlet](#). COABE's AEFL Week Press release on behalf of the field was opened by over 4.3 million people.
- **Encouraged Advocacy by the COABE Field.** During the 2024 COABE National Conference in Nashville and throughout the year, COABE hosted sessions to support members in their advocacy efforts. We also included weekly updates and action alerts to further galvanize the field. Quarterly, COABE reaches an audience of over 160,000 people and counting. COABE members sent out over 2,104 Voter Voice messages advocating for increased funding for adult education in the FY25 appropriations bill and over 500 messages advocating for the Adult Education WORKS Act in the Senate. Further, during the month of Advocacy April alone, over 40,000 people were reached with the message that adult education matters and deserves to be funded.
- **Trained Cohort 4 of State Advocates for Adult Education.** COABE trained nearly 40 fellows across the country to engage in state and federal advocacy on behalf of adult education. In addition to the training they participated in, State Advocates for Adult Education Fellows (SAAEF) brought advocacy training and professional development opportunities back to their state. This resulted in 12 advocacy trainings across the nation.
- **Welcome new COABE Student Ambassadors.** COABE's Student Ambassadors increased into 2024, reaching a new high of 392 trained ambassadors in 48 states.
- **Facilitated Social Media Advocacy.** COABE reached over 55,865 people during AEFL Week alone. COABE asked State Advocates for Adult Education Fellows (SAAEF) to utilize social media for advocacy. The results were that over 30 individuals reposted COABE advocacy content and posted their own data and stories throughout the year.
- **Encouraged Advocacy through Earned Media.** COABE's 4th cohort of SAAEF fellows published 3 Op Eds and numerous press releases leading up to and immediately following AEFL Week.

Commented on Regulatory Guidance:

- **Urged that consistent language be used to define measurable skill gain (MSG) Type 4 of the National Reporting System for Adult Education.** In response to the comment request by the Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) on the National Reporting System for Adult Education (NRS), COABE provided public input on OCTAE's proposed changes. COABE advocated for all MSGs for Integrated Education and Training (IET) students to be reported while also asking for Table 4 of the NRS to be streamlined so that submitting data on adult education programs is easier. COABE also galvanized other organizations to provide similar comments.
- **Urged that the Department of Education provides appropriate training to career navigators.** In response to the Department of Education's Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development's request for comments, COABE provided input on training and support for career navigators. COABE urged both quality research on the efficacy of training for career navigators to ensure the success of adult learners, and data collection and dissemination of best practices to adult education programs.

Recognized Adult Education Champions:

- **Awarded Our Legislative Champions.** COABE presented its "Champion of Adult Education Leadership Award" to several local, State and Federal legislators who have championed adult education issues this year and/or throughout their legislative careers. The following U.S. Senators and Representatives were honored with the Champion of Adult Education Leadership Award for 2024:
 - Senator Jack Reed (D-RI)
 - Senator Todd Young (R-IN)
 - Senator Tim Kaine (D-VA)
 - Senator Susan Collins (R-ME)
 - Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI)
 - Senator Tina Smith (D-MN)
 - Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK)
 - Senator Bill Cassidy (R-LA)
 - Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT)
 - Senator Chris Van Hollen (D-MD)
 - Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS)
 - Senator Bob Casey (D-PA)
 - Representative Lucy McBath (D-GA)
 - Representative Daniel Goldman (D-NY)
 - Representative Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ)
 - Representative Bobby Scott (D-VA)
 - Representative Virginia Foxx (R-NC)
 - Representative Morgan McGarvey (D-KY)
 - Representative Gwen Moore (D-WI)
 - Representative Mike Bost (R-IL)
 - Representative Danny Davis (D-IL)
 - Representative Sean Casten (D-IL)

These successes could not have been accomplished without your efforts and advocacy. We look forward to continuing to advocate for adult learners and educators in the future.