

Michael Lamb, Board Member at Literacy Pittsburgh  
Testimony to Education Committee of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives  
September 16, 2024

Good afternoon honorable members of the Pennsylvania House Education Committee, staff and colleagues.

My name is Michael Lamb, and I am here representing Literacy Pittsburgh. I recently joined the Literacy Pittsburgh board after a 40-year career in public service in Allegheny County.

I chose to join the board because literacy is the most significant step on the path from poverty to prosperity and Literacy Pittsburgh plays a crucial role in building the brainpower of our community.

I urge you to recognize and invest in this small, but mighty field of adult basic education that is standing in the gap between K-12 education, higher education and work.

Now more than ever, we need the gaps in our education and workforce system to be smaller. We must help more working-age adults get good jobs just as we help employers across the Commonwealth fill open positions. Employers in just about every sector are worried about their workforce pipeline as eligible workers continue to age out of the workforce.

This is the work that adult education programs across the State do.

Literacy Pittsburgh works with thousands of adults and their families to increase their basic reading, writing, math, digital literacy, and workplace skills—prerequisites for advancement into middle-skills employment.

### **Demand**

In Allegheny County the only segment of the population that is growing is immigrants. And we need them.

The increase in this population has led to Literacy Pittsburgh **servicing twice as many students today as it did 4 years ago**. Last year we served 3,400 adults and still have **waiting lists that averaged 400 people per month for more than a year**.

Like most adult education providers, we're servicing American-born students too - about 1/3 of our population.

Whether left behind or just arrived, these amazing adults find their way to Literacy Pittsburgh to build better lives.

### **Impact**

Not only are we servicing significantly more people, but we're also helping them transition to higher education, job training and work.

According to PDE's recent performance data, Literacy Pittsburgh is a leader in PA for enrollment and post-secondary transitions, high school equivalency attainment, and educational gains.

Behind these numbers are real people's lives:

- Consider Helene from Central African Republic, who was forced flee her home country due to war, leaving behind her career. She studied English with Literacy Pittsburgh where she got connected to the Marriott and is now a supervisor.
- And Matthew from Beaver County, who studied with us to achieve his GED, entered a culinary program and then went on to get a good job in food service at Robert Morris University.
- And Sara who passed her Bidwell Training Center entrance test with the assistance of Literacy Pittsburgh's math brush-up class. Sara is now studying medical billing and coding.
- And Jorge, who came to Pittsburgh from central America. He studies English with a Literacy Pittsburgh tutor and was recently accepted into the Carpenters Apprenticeship Program.

### **Closing**

The demand for basic skills education exceeds the supply (remember the waiting lists) – working age adults want the training and employers need workers.

Our program is delivering great results both when you look at the numbers and when you hear about the lives that have changed.

Yet Pennsylvania's investment in adult education has barely moved in 12 years.

I know that you have made incredible, needed progress investing in K-12 and in higher education.

In fact, if those investments were sufficient, Literacy Pittsburgh wouldn't have 400 people on its waiting list.

The good news is that compared to those investments, it won't take much to expand the capacity of adult education in PA.

We're advocating for \$7 million in next year's budget. That's not even a rounding error in PDE's budget, much less Pennsylvania's.

With your support, we can make this modest investment and move more working age adults into meaningful work while helping employers fill job openings.

This makes good financial sense.

Thank you for your consideration.

Carey Harris, CEO  
Literacy Pittsburgh  
Testimony to House Education Committee  
September 16, 2024

Chairman Schweyer, Members of the Education Committee, thank you for hosting this hearing about adult basic education and for the opportunity to provide written testimony.

The fact that the Pennsylvania economy is currently constrained by a shortage of workers, especially skilled workers, is well established.

The General Assembly and the Shapiro Administration have made commendable investments in K-12 schools, higher education, early learning, and workforce programs to address the need.

Yet the important, essential, and expeditious role that adult basic education<sup>i</sup> plays has not been fully leveraged to meet the Commonwealth's economic challenges.

**By the end of today's hearing, I hope you are convinced that a relatively small increased investment of \$7 million in the Adult and Family Literacy line item can and will have an outsized, positive impact on the Commonwealth's economic growth.**

We urge the Governor and General Assembly to invest an additional \$7 million in the Adult and Family Literacy line item in the next budget cycle so that more workers, job seekers, families, and employers can benefit from what adult basic education has to offer.

As you have heard and will hear from my colleagues across the State, adult basic education is often the last and only chance for many Pennsylvanians to build careers that can sustain a family.

In Allegheny and Beaver counties, nearly 64,000 working-age adults do not have a high school credential. Additionally, 123,000 adults do not speak English well or at all, and tens of thousands more lack basic literacy and numeracy skills<sup>ii</sup>. As you know, educational status often correlates with other barriers, such as housing and food insecurity, low-wage work, and poor health outcomes.

Basic skills are essential prerequisites for a meaningful life and family-sustaining work, job training, apprenticeships, higher education, and being a fully functional adult in a world undergoing a rapid technological transformation.

At Literacy Pittsburgh, basic skills mean

- Learning the English language to find work, raise a family, become part of the community, and attain citizenship.
- Brushing up math and reading skills to enter apprenticeships or job training programs
- Attaining a GED credential to open the door to better jobs as well as postsecondary education, and job training.
- Building digital skills and attaining industry-recognized certifications to find work, build a career, support a child's education, manage health, conduct banking, protect one's identity, and much, much more.

Like our colleagues across the State, the impact of our work is measured by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE). According to PDE's recently released performance data, Literacy Pittsburgh's program is a leader in enrollment—the largest enrollment in the State. We also lead our peers in postsecondary transitions, high school equivalency attainment, and educational gains.

**In fact, Literacy Pittsburgh is serving twice as many students as we did in FY21, and we have increased student outcomes (employment, postsecondary transitions, and GED attainment combined) by 78% over this same period.**

**Demand for our program is outstripping the supply of our current resources. We have been carrying a waiting list averaging 400+ potential students per month for over a year.**

We expect demand to stay strong well into the future, as more foreign-born students are coming into Pittsburgh legally, and our American-born student population is growing due to disruptions in K-12 education created by the pandemic.

More than half of the revenue needed to provide services comes from sources other than Literacy Pittsburgh's adult basic education contracts with the PDE. We are leveraging support from individual donors, foundations, corporations, local governments, and other government grants.

**In short, we're a good bet.**

Our community thinks so too. Attached to this testimony are letters of support from elected officials, workforce investment boards, employers, chambers of commerce, refugee resettlement agencies, and other community partners urging the General Assembly to increase its investment in adult basic education.

Our students know we are a good bet, too. Below is a sampling of student notes celebrating their achievements and thanking us for our work.

"Ms. Emily, I really appreciate all your help. I'm now a student of West Penn Hospital School of Nursing getting my RN. Schooling is already paid in full for this year and I start in one week. I'm so very excited for this journey, but I always have to take the time to send my thanks to the people who helped me get here. I could not have done it without you! I hope you are doing well, and class is going well. I'm sure it is tough with a teacher like you! Keep changing people's lives!"



After searching for a job since the start of the year, Brenda decided to pursue a Patient Services Representative position with UPMC. She interviewed virtually, and then in person, and was offered the position.

**"The instructors at Literacy Pittsburgh were all professional, polite, respectful, approachable, kind, and generous in sharing their knowledge, anticipating questions I didn't even know to ask. The classes were very convenient and I really appreciated the opportunity to earn a laptop,"** Brenda says.

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"I am an Iraqi visual artist who fled my country during the sectarian war. My family and I moved to a neighboring country, where I stayed for 10 years waiting for my refugee status. During that time, I couldn't resume my artwork or participate in any art exhibitions.

I finally arrived in Pittsburgh, USA, and joined Literacy Pittsburgh. The support I found from my Literacy Pittsburgh teachers, helped me restore my life balance. With their assistance, I applied for the Adolf Foundation, and the Esther Gottlieb scholarships.

**I am very happy to have overcome many difficulties with Literacy Pittsburgh's staff help.** In fact, I have started to complete my first sculptural work here in Pittsburgh using recycled materials. I am looking forward to having my own art exhibition in Pittsburgh."

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These are just a few of the amazing stories Literacy Pittsburgh is privileged to be a part of. For more good news about the impact of your investment on people's lives and employers, follow us on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn (Literacy Pittsburgh on all) and X (literacypgh).

**Thank you again for holding the hearing, learning about our work, and considering our urgent plea for resources. I hope our waiting students can count on your support.**

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<sup>1</sup> Funded through the Adult and Family Literacy line item in PDE's budget  
<sup>2</sup> Program for International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)  
<https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/piaac/skillsmap/>

COUNTY OF



ALLEGHENY

SARA INNAMORATO  
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

January 24, 2024

The Honorable Josh Shapiro  
Governor, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
225 Main Capitol Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17120


Dear Governor Shapiro:

I write to urge you and the General Assembly to significantly increase Pennsylvania's investment in adult basic skills as part of your investment in growing Pennsylvania's workforce. Specifically, I urge a \$15.5 million increase in the Department of Education's Adult and Family Literacy Line item in the Commonwealth's FY25 budget as well as creation of the \$15 million Adult Education and Workforce Development Recovery Fund for short term flexible dollars to address the urgent need for skilled workers.

As you know, the Adult and Family Literacy line-item funds adult basic education services for the Commonwealth's working age adults who lack basic skills required to meaningfully participate in the workforce – 18% of Pennsylvania adults meet these criteria. For too long, Pennsylvania has neglected this essential part of the education and workforce system. The line item was cut in half in 2008 and has remained level until last year's modest increase. Meanwhile costs have climbed along with compliance requirements, reducing the value of the State's investment. In addition, the influx of immigrants and refugees across the Commonwealth has provided not only a great opportunity to strengthen our communities but has also resulted in huge waiting lists for English language learning services supported by this line item. In Allegheny County, providers such as Literacy Pittsburgh has been preparing thousands of adults for work for years – work that represents critical investments not only in our local communities, but in our local economy. Today, Literacy Pittsburgh has more than 500 people waiting for English language classes. To leave the line-item level funded for another year will dramatically lessen the Commonwealth's ability to move more of our residents out of poverty and into work, while further hamstringing employers' ability to find skilled workers. I appreciate the commitment made with the current year increase and I urge you to ensure more is included in the Commonwealth's FY25 budget.

The Adult Education and Workforce Development Recovery Fund (HB25/SB462) proposal will enable adult and family literacy providers and others to apply for one-time grants to expand capacity with new and innovative programming to help employers find skilled workers and help more Pennsylvanians get back to work. Specifically, the fund would support partnerships with job training programs and employers, digital skills training, career services, and support for post-secondary costs – all issues identified by employers, job seekers and adult education providers across the Commonwealth. Adult basic education is a critical piece of our education and workforce system and I appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

  
Sara Innamorato  
Allegheny County Executive

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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An affiliate of the Allegheny Conference

March 12, 2024

Governor Josh Shapiro  
508 Main Capitol  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Shapiro,

On behalf of the Allegheny Conference on Community Development (the Conference) and our affiliate the Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce, I write to offer support for increasing the Adult and Family Literacy Education line item in the Department of Education's budget to \$30 million to address the urgent need for skilled workers.

Pennsylvania is facing a contraction of working-age adults and is met with a workforce shortage that remains an ongoing challenge. Adult and Family Literacy Education in Pennsylvania is an entry point for thousands of Pennsylvanians into the state's workforce development systems. There are 1.6 million working-age adults within the Commonwealth who struggle with literacy and basic skills. With more funding, organizations such as Literacy Pittsburgh can provide adult learners with access to education services, helping them grow out of poverty and engage in the workforce.

Led by nearly 250 of the region's business and civic leaders, the Conference drives economic development in the 10-county southwestern Pennsylvania region surrounding Pittsburgh to improve the economy and quality of life for all. The Conference encourages investments that decrease barriers to employment and earning opportunities. Increasing the Adult and Family Literacy Education line item will enable an additional 9,150 adults to access the Pennsylvania Association for Adult Continuing Education services to accelerate workforce development and meet industry talent needs.

Pennsylvania's investment in Adult and Family Literacy Education is helping thousands go from learning to earning and directly contributes to our region's prosperity. More than 700,000 working-age adults in Pennsylvania do not have a high school credential, which keeps them out of employment and job training. Partners in Adult and Family Literacy Education provide education and help people in need secure jobs.

When the Commonwealth invests in Adult and Family Literacy Education, it invests in helping to solve the Commonwealth's workforce shortage. The conference supports additional funding for adult continuing education and thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Majestic Lane".

Majestic Lane  
Chief Equity Officer,  
Allegheny Conference on Community Development





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1/10/2024

Governor Josh Shapiro  
508 Main Capitol  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Shapiro,

On behalf of the Pittsburgh Airport Area Chamber of Commerce, I write to urge you to support Pennsylvania's investment in workforce development by increasing the Adult and Family Literacy Education line item in the Department of Education's budget to \$30 million. With Pennsylvania facing a contraction of working age adults, we must find ways to ensure that no Pennsylvanian is left behind. The 1.6 million working age adults who struggle with literacy and basic skills can be part of the solution. All they need is a chance to access education services to build their skills. Adult and Family Literacy Education in Pennsylvania is an entry point into the state's workforce development systems for thousands of Pennsylvanians.

Pennsylvania's investment in Adult and Family Literacy Education is helping thousands go from learning to earning and contributing to our region's prosperity. Additional resources will ensure that these programs reach more people in need and support their ability to get and keep good jobs that support their families. Yet, Adult and Family Literacy Education funding is misaligned with the need. More than 700,000 working age adults in Pennsylvania do not have a high school credential, keeping them out of jobs and job training. More than 700,000 adults do not speak English well or at all, many who are highly skilled such as doctors, nurses, accountants, and other professionals who can only work in entry level jobs because they need to speak, read, and write English. This is what our partners in Adult and Family Literacy Education do – they help those left behind attain a basic education and help the newly arrived learn English and reclaim their careers.

When the Commonwealth invests in Adult and Family Literacy Education, it invests in helping employers like the hundreds of Pittsburgh Airport Area Chamber member companies and various training programs find qualified candidates who can succeed.

Thank for supporting Adult and Family Literacy Education in Pennsylvania.

Sincerely,

Chris Heck

President/CEO Pittsburgh Airport Area Chamber of Commerce



January 10, 2024

Governor Josh Shapiro  
508 Main Capitol  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Shapiro,

On behalf of the Pittsburgh A. Philip Randolph institute, I write to urge you to support Pennsylvania's investment in workforce development by increasing the Adult and Family Literacy Education line item in the Department of Education's budget to \$30 million. With Pennsylvania facing a contraction of working age adults, we must find ways to ensure that no Pennsylvanian is left behind. The 1.6 million working age adults who struggle with literacy and basic skills can be part of the solution. All they need is a chance to access education services to build their skills. Adult and Family Literacy Education in Pennsylvania is an entry point into the state's workforce development systems for thousands of Pennsylvanians.

The Pittsburgh A. Philip Randolph Institute (APRI) is a workforce development agency that is committed to social progress for minorities, the poor, and working people and is dedicated to creating programs that extend democracy, education and opportunity to those traditionally disenfranchised or discouraged from participation. To that end, APRI operated the Pennsylvania registered Breaking the Chains of Poverty (BTCPP) pre-apprenticeship program which helps individuals build the skills necessary to obtain family sustaining careers in the building and construction trades, manufacturing and emerging energy sector jobs. As local adult education provider, Literacy Pittsburgh, is helping our participants acquire the basic skills they need to be successful in the BTCPP program by provided TABE Testing, GED preparation and testing, and computer literacy training to our participants.

Pennsylvania's investment in Adult and Family Literacy Education is helping thousands go from learning to earning and contributing to our region's prosperity. Additional resources will ensure that these programs reach more people in need and support their ability to get and keep good jobs that support their families. Yet, Adult and Family Literacy Education funding is misaligned with the need. More than 700,000 working age adults in Pennsylvania do not have a high school credential, keeping them out of jobs and job training. More than 700,000 adults do not speak English well or at all, many who are highly skilled such as doctors, nurses, accountants, and other professionals who can only work in entry level jobs because they need to speak, read and write English. This is what our partners in Adult and Family Literacy Education do – they help those left behind attain a basic education and help the newly arrived learn English and reclaim their careers.



When the Commonwealth invests in Adult and Family Literacy Education, it invests in helping Workforce development providers like the A. Philip Randolph Institute find qualified candidates who can succeed.

Thank for supporting Adult and Family Literacy Education in Pennsylvania.

Sincerely,

DeWitt Walton  
Vice President



1815 Metropolitan Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15233

Telephone: 412-323-4000  
Fax: 412-321-2120

[www.bidwelltraining.edu](http://www.bidwelltraining.edu)

December 18, 2023

Governor Josh Shapiro  
508 Main Capitol  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Shapiro,

On behalf of Bidwell Training Center, I write to urge you to support Pennsylvania's investment in workforce development by increasing the Adult and Family Literacy Education line item in the Department of Education's budget to \$30 million. With Pennsylvania facing a contraction of working age adults, we must find ways to ensure that no Pennsylvanian is left behind. The 1.6 million working age adults who struggle with literacy and basic skills can be part of the solution. All they need is a chance to access education services to build their skills. Adult and Family Literacy Education in Pennsylvania is an entry point into the state's workforce development systems for thousands of Pennsylvanians.

Bidwell Training Center (BTC) was established in 1968 in response to the social unrest and economic declines that followed the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Having founded Manchester Craftsmen's Guild during the same period, William E. Strickland, Jr. was asked to assume leadership of BTC in 1972. Strickland believed that the combination of adult career training, which includes adult literacy education, and youth arts programming provided a holistic means of addressing the community's needs. Importantly, BTC provides career training at no cost to eligible Pennsylvania residents, delivering education and resources to a diverse population of adults in transition. BTC's programs emphasize middle skills training and are developed in collaboration with employers in the Pittsburgh region to identify gaps in their workforce and create programs that will lead to careers that pay a living wage, demonstrate long-term demand, and provide entry-level positions with clear career paths.

In Allegheny County, Literacy Pittsburgh is working with Bidwell Training Center to prepare participants for a variety of our training programs, including Pharmacy Technician, Chemical Laboratory Technician, Medical Assistant, Medical Coder/Biller, Culinary Arts, and Horticulture Technology. Literacy Pittsburgh staff is on site to coordinate and support basic skills education such as math, reading, writing, and digital literacy skills through tutoring and class-based instruction. Working together, we ensure more adults can be successful in our job training programs and move into middle skills work.

Pennsylvania's investment in Adult and Family Literacy Education is helping thousands go from learning to earning and contributing to our region's prosperity. Additional resources will ensure that these programs reach more people in need and support their ability to get and keep good jobs that support their families. Yet, Adult and Family Literacy Education funding is misaligned with the need. More than 700,0000 working age adults in Pennsylvania do not have a high school credential,

keeping them out of jobs and job training. More than 700,000 adults do not speak English well or at all, many who are highly skilled such as doctors, nurses, accountants, and other professionals who can only work in entry level jobs because they need to speak, read, and write English. This is what our partners in Adult and Family Literacy Education do – they help those left behind attain a basic education and help the newly arrived learn English and reclaim their careers.

Bidwell Training Center believes adult basic literacy is a critical piece of our education and workforce system and warrants investment to help solve the Commonwealth's workforce shortage. When the Commonwealth invests in Adult and Family Literacy Education, it invests in helping training programs like Bidwell Training Center find qualified candidates who can succeed.

Thank you for supporting Adult and Family Literacy Education in Pennsylvania.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin L. Jenkins". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kevin L. Jenkins, LSW  
President & CEO  
Manchester Bidwell Corporation

cc: Dr. Kimberly Rassau, Vice President  
Bidwell Training Center



Downtown Pittsburgh  
914 Penn Ave, 6<sup>th</sup> floor.  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

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PACareerLink.pa.gov

January 9, 2024

Governor Josh Shapiro  
508 Main Capitol  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Shapiro,

On behalf of PA CareerLink® Pittsburgh, I write to urge you to support Pennsylvania's investment in workforce development by increasing the Adult and Family Literacy Education line item in the Department of Education's budget to \$30 million. With Pennsylvania facing a contraction of working age adults, we must find ways to ensure that no Pennsylvanian is left behind. The 1.6 million working age adults who struggle with literacy and basic skills can be part of the solution. All they need is a chance to access education services to build their skills. Adult and Family Literacy Education in Pennsylvania is an entry point into the state's workforce development systems for thousands of Pennsylvanians.

PA CareerLink® Pittsburgh is a collaborative project between multiple agencies to provide career services to Pennsylvania employers, potential employees, and others. Our local education provider, Literacy Pittsburgh, is helping adults acquire the basic skills they need to be successful in their jobs and prepare them for building career pathways with the employers within our pipeline.

Pennsylvania's investment in Adult and Family Literacy is helping thousands go from learning to earning and contributing to our region's prosperity. Additional resources will ensure that these programs reach more people in need and support their ability to get and keep good jobs that support their families. Yet, Adult and Family Literacy Education funding is misaligned with the need. More than 700,000 working age adults in Pennsylvania do not have a high school credential, keeping them out of jobs and job training. More than 700,000 adults do not speak English well or at all, many who are highly skilled such as doctors, nurses, accountants, and other professionals who can only work in entry level jobs because they need to speak, read, and write English. This is what our partners in Adult and Family Literacy Education do – they help those left behind attain a basic education and help the newly arrived learn English and reclaim their careers. When the Commonwealth invests in Adult and Family Literacy Education, it invests in helping agencies like PA CareerLink® and various training programs find qualified candidates who can succeed.

Thank you for supporting Adult and Family Literacy Education in Pennsylvania,

Sincerely,

*Amy Sijva-Blystone*

Amy Sijva-Blystone  
PA CareerLink® Pittsburgh  
Site Administrator/Interim One-Stop Operator

A proud partner of the  American Job Center network  
*Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.  
Equal Opportunity Employer/Program*



## Latino Resource & Welcome Center

An Outreach of the Sisters of St. Joseph

2116 Broadway Ave  
Pittsburgh, PA 15216  
Phone: 412-343-3111  
Fax: 412-343-3210  
[office@casasanjose.org](mailto:office@casasanjose.org)

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January 25, 2024

Governor Josh Shapiro  
508 Main Capitol  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Shapiro,

On behalf of Casa San Jose, I write to urge you to support Pennsylvania's investment in workforce development by increasing the Adult and Family Literacy Education line item in the Department of Education's budget to \$30 million. With Pennsylvania facing a contraction of working age adults, we must find ways to ensure that no Pennsylvanian is left behind. The 1.6 million working age adults who struggle with literacy and basic skills can be part of the solution. All they need is a chance to access education services to build their skills. Adult and Family Literacy Education in Pennsylvania is an entry point into the state's workforce development systems for thousands of Pennsylvanians.

Casa San Jose is the largest Latino serving organization in the Western Region of the Commonwealth. We have seen a population growth of Latinos of over 80% in the past 10 years and that number is rising. Over 70% of the people we serve every week are new arrivals that are monolingual Spanish speaking immigrants. Our population in Allegheny County has been steadily declining for over 20 years and the only population that is growing is the immigrant population. We need immigrants to help our neighborhoods grow and thrive. Learning English is one of the top priorities that our new neighbors have and by gaining this skill they are able to better acclimate to their new lives and find better jobs to help them on their journey to finding better lives for themselves and their families

Pennsylvania's investment in Adult and Family Literacy Education is helping thousands go from learning to earning and contributing to our region's prosperity. Additional resources will ensure that these programs reach more people in need and support their ability to get and keep good jobs that support their families. Yet, Adult and Family Literacy Education funding is misaligned with the need. More than 700,000 working age adults in Pennsylvania do not have a high school credential, keeping them out of jobs and job training. More than 700,000 adults do not speak English well or at all, many who are highly skilled such as doctors, nurses, accountants, and other professionals who can only work in entry level jobs because they need to speak, read and write English. This is what



## **Latino Resource & Welcome Center**

**An Outreach of the Sisters of St. Joseph**

2116 Broadway Ave  
Pittsburgh, PA 15216  
*Phone:* 412-343-3111  
*Fax:* 412-343-3210  
[office@casasanjose.org](mailto:office@casasanjose.org)

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our partners in Adult and Family Literacy Education do – they help those left behind attain a basic education and help the newly arrived learn English and reclaim their careers.

When the Commonwealth invests in Adult and Family Literacy Education, it invests in helping organizations like Casa San Jose and other social service organization provide quality resources to our community members so that they can succeed.

Thank for supporting Adult and Family Literacy Education in Pennsylvania.

Sincerely,

*Monica Rung, MSW*





SUPPORTING PEOPLE THROUGH LIFE'S CHANGES & CHALLENGES

1/22/2024

Governor Josh Shapiro  
508 Main Capitol  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Shapiro,

On behalf of Jewish Family and Community Services of Pittsburgh, I am writing to urge you to support Pennsylvania's investment in workforce development by increasing the Adult and Family Literacy Education line item in the Department of Education's budget to \$30 million. With Pennsylvania facing a contraction of working age adults, we must find ways to ensure that no Pennsylvanian is left behind. The 1.6 million working age adults who struggle with literacy and basic skills can be part of the solution. All they need is a chance to access education services to build their skills. Adult and Family Literacy Education in Pennsylvania is an entry point into the state's workforce development systems for thousands of Pennsylvanians.

JFCS Pittsburgh has been a nonprofit organization in Allegheny County since 1937, providing a range of social services including refugee resettlement, immigration legal services, employment support, mental health services, and food pantry services. Our services are designed to maximize self-sufficiency, which strengthens individuals, families, and our regional economy. Many of our services depend on our clients developing the skills necessary for obtaining and maintaining employment.

Pennsylvania's investment in Adult and Family Literacy Education is helping thousands go from learning to earning and contributing to our region's prosperity. Additional resources will ensure that these programs reach more people in need and support their ability to get and keep good jobs that support their families. Yet, Adult and Family Literacy Education funding is misaligned with the need. More than 700,000 working age adults in Pennsylvania do not have a high school credential, keeping them out of jobs and job training. More than 700,000 adults do not speak English well or at all, many who are highly skilled such as doctors, nurses, accountants, and other professionals who can only work in entry level jobs because they need to speak, read and write English. This is what our partners in Adult and Family Literacy Education do – they help those left behind attain a basic education and help the newly arrived learn English and reclaim their careers.

Thank you for supporting Adult and Family Literacy Education in Pennsylvania.  
Sincerely,

Jordan Golin, President & CEO





January 18, 2024

Governor Josh Shapiro  
508 Main Capitol  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Shapiro,

On behalf of Job Training for Beaver County, Inc., I write to urge you to support Pennsylvania's investment in workforce development by increasing the Adult and Family Literacy Education line item in the Department of Education's budget to \$30 million. With Pennsylvania facing a contraction of working age adults, we must find ways to ensure that no Pennsylvanian is left behind. The 1.6 million working age adults who struggle with literacy and basic skills can be part of the solution. All they need is a chance to access education services to build their skills. Adult and Family Literacy Education in Pennsylvania is an entry point into the state's workforce development systems for thousands of Pennsylvanians.

Our organization is a PA CareerLink® partner and delivers WIOA Title I career and training services for youth, adults and dislocated workers. One of the greatest challenges for these populations is acquiring the level of basic literacy skills necessary to train for and secure employment offering family-sustaining wages and a career pathway. Our local adult education provider, Literacy Pittsburgh, also a PA CareerLink® partner, has been instrumental in helping these populations acquire these skills.

Pennsylvania's investment in Adult and Family Literacy Education is helping thousands go from learning to earning and contributing to our region's prosperity. Additional resources will ensure that these programs reach more people in need and support their ability to get and keep good jobs that support their families. Yet, Adult and Family Literacy Education funding is misaligned with the need. More than 700,000 working age adults in Pennsylvania do not have a high school credential, keeping them out of jobs and job training. More than 700,000 adults do not speak English well or at all, many who are highly skilled such as doctors, nurses, accountants, and other professionals who can only work in entry level jobs because they need to speak, read and write English. This is what our partners in Adult and Family Literacy Education do – they help those left behind attain a basic education and help the newly arrived learn English and reclaim their careers.

When the Commonwealth invests in Adult and Family Literacy Education, it invests in helping youth, adults and dislocated workers acquire the level of basic literacy skills necessary to train for and secure employment offering family-sustaining wages and a career pathway. This also provides employers with the pool of skilled job candidates they need to grow and compete.

Thank for supporting Adult and Family Literacy Education in Pennsylvania.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Richard Strother".

Rich Strother  
Executive Director



## LATINO COMMUNITY CENTER

2/5/2024

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & FOUNDER

Rosamaria Cristello

Governor Josh Shapiro  
508 Main Capitol  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

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Alex Madrid

Ariana Ornelas Smyth

Alex Kudlik

Jenn Beer

Dear Governor Shapiro,

On behalf of the Latino Community Center (LCC), I write to urge you to support Pennsylvania's investment in workforce development by increasing the Adult and Family Literacy Education line item in the Department of Education's budget to \$30 million. With Pennsylvania facing a contraction of working age adults, we must find ways to ensure that no Pennsylvanian is left behind. The 1.6 million working age adults who struggle with literacy and basic skills can be part of the solution. All they need is a chance to access education services to build their skills. Adult and Family Literacy Education in Pennsylvania is an entry point into the state's workforce development systems for thousands of Pennsylvanians.

The LCC is a nonprofit organization established and governed by our Latinx community in Pittsburgh. Our mission is to Empower, Advocate with and Celebrate Latinos in Allegheny County. We focus on providing high quality education programs from Early Childhood Education to College Readiness, and we run the Latino Family Center whose focus is on supporting parents and caregivers to raise healthy and happy children. This year, we are seeing an average of 50 \*new\* Latinx families moving into our region and coming to our Welcome Center to seek support in settling into the region. In fact, the Latinx community grew by 80% in Allegheny County between 2010-2020. One of the main requests we get from our community is the need for ESL classes. It is clear to us that our community is hungry to learn and continue to grow.

### ADVISORY BOARD

Dr. Quinton Bullock

Frederick Thieman

Barbara Murock

Mary Phan-Gruber

Saleem Ghubril

Evan Segal



412-335-7446



[info@latinocommunitycenter.org](mailto:info@latinocommunitycenter.org)



[latinocommunitycenter.org](http://latinocommunitycenter.org)



## LATINO COMMUNITY CENTER

Pennsylvania's investment in Adult and Family Literacy Education is helping thousands go from learning to earning and contributing to our region's prosperity. Additional resources will ensure that these programs reach more people in need and support their ability to get and keep good jobs that support their families. Yet, Adult and Family Literacy Education funding is misaligned with the need. More than 700,000 working age adults in Pennsylvania do not have a high school credential, keeping them out of jobs and job training. More than 700,000 adults do not speak English well or at all, many who are highly skilled such as doctors, nurses, accountants, and other professionals who can only work in entry level jobs because they need to speak, read and write English. This is what our partners in Adult and Family Literacy Education do – they help those left behind attain a basic education and help the newly arrived learn English and reclaim their careers.

When the Commonwealth invests in Adult and Family Literacy Education, it invests in helping hardworking families break the cycle of poverty and ensure they are positioning their kids for a better future.

Thank for supporting Adult and Family Literacy Education in Pennsylvania.

Sincerely,

Rosamaria Cristello, Founder & Executive Director  
[rcristello@latinocommunitycenter.org](mailto:rcristello@latinocommunitycenter.org)



412-335-7446



[info@latinocommunitycenter.org](mailto:info@latinocommunitycenter.org)



[latinocommunitycenter.org](http://latinocommunitycenter.org)

January 11, 2024

Governor Josh Shapiro  
508 Main Capitol  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Shapiro,

On behalf of Partner4Work, I write to urge you to support Pennsylvania's investment in workforce development by increasing the Adult and Family Literacy Education line item in the Department of Education's budget to \$30 million. With Pennsylvania facing a contraction of working age adults, we must find ways to ensure that no Pennsylvanian is left behind. The 1.6 million working age adults who struggle with literacy and basic skills can be part of the solution. All they need is a chance to access education services to build their skills. Adult and Family Literacy Education in Pennsylvania is an entry point into the state's workforce development systems for thousands of Pennsylvanians.

As the workforce development board for Allegheny County and the City of Pittsburgh, Partner4Work works with businesses throughout our service area who are still in need of skilled workers. Job seekers served by the PA CareerLink® in our local area often need the additional support provided by organizations like Literacy Pittsburgh in order to be ready to work. Literacy Pittsburgh is helping adults acquire the basic skills they need to be successful in their jobs and prepare them for building a career pathway with the employers in our region.

Pennsylvania's investment in Adult and Family Literacy Education is helping thousands go from learning to earning and contributing to our region's prosperity. Additional resources will ensure that these programs reach more people in need and support their ability to get and keep good jobs that support their families. Yet, Adult and Family Literacy Education funding is misaligned with the need. More than 700,000 working age adults in Pennsylvania do not have a high school credential, keeping them out of jobs and job training. More than 700,000 adults do not speak English well or at all, many who are highly skilled such as doctors, nurses, accountants, and other professionals who can only work in entry level jobs because they need to speak, read and write English. This is what our partners in Adult and Family Literacy Education do – they help those left behind attain a basic education and help the newly arrived learn English and reclaim their careers.

When the Commonwealth invests in Adult and Family Literacy Education, it invests in helping employers and training programs find qualified candidates who can succeed.

Thank you for supporting Adult and Family Literacy Education in Pennsylvania.

Sincerely,



Rob Cherry  
Chief Executive Officer

January 9, 2024

Governor Josh Shapiro  
508 Main Capitol  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Shapiro,

On behalf of the Southwest Corner Workforce Development Board (SCWDB), I write to urge you to support Pennsylvania's investment in workforce development by increasing the Adult and Family Literacy Education line item in the Department of Education's budget to \$30 million. With Pennsylvania facing a contraction of working age adults, we must find ways to ensure that no Pennsylvanian is left behind. The 1.6 million working age adults who struggle with literacy and basic skills can be part of the solution. All they need is a chance to access education services to build their skills. Adult and Family Literacy Education in Pennsylvania is an entry point into the state's workforce development systems for thousands of Pennsylvanians.

The mission of SCWDB is to develop policies, oversee public funds, and procure services that will help employers and job seekers throughout Washington, Greene and Beaver counties. Job placement assistance, education, training and counseling are offered in order to achieve a skilled workforce and economic development throughout the region. We envision a regional labor pool that possesses the skills and attitudes to attract and retain employers who offer sufficient wages, benefits, and opportunities for advancement. Our local adult education provider, Literacy Pittsburgh, is helping adults acquire the basic skills they need to be successful in their jobs and prepare them for building career pathways with our regional employers.

Pennsylvania's investment in Adult and Family Literacy Education is helping thousands go from learning to earning and contributing to our region's prosperity. Additional resources will ensure that these programs reach more people in need and support their ability to get and keep good jobs that support their families. Yet, Adult and Family Literacy Education funding is misaligned with the need. More than 700,000 working age adults in Pennsylvania do not have a high school credential, keeping them out of jobs and job training. More than 700,000 adults do not speak English well or at all, many who are highly skilled such as doctors, nurses, accountants, and other professionals who can only work in entry level jobs because they need to speak, read and write English. This is what our partners in Adult and Family Literacy Education do – they help those left behind attain a basic education and help the newly arrived learn English and reclaim their careers.

When the Commonwealth invests in Adult and Family Literacy Education, it invests in helping local employers and various training programs find qualified candidates who can succeed.

Southwest Corner  
**WORKFORCE**  
Development Board



Beaver County • Greene County • Washington County

351 West Beau Street, Suite 300  
Washington, PA 15301  
Phone: 724-229-5083  
Fax: 724-229-5086  
[www.SouthwestCornerWDB.com](http://www.SouthwestCornerWDB.com)

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Thank for supporting Adult and Family Literacy Education in Pennsylvania.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ami Gatts'.

Ami Gatts  
Director

October 12, 2024

Governor Josh Shapiro  
508 Main Capitol  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Shapiro,

On behalf of UPMC Presbyterian/Shadyside, I write to urge you to support Pennsylvania's investment in workforce development by increasing the Adult and Family Literacy Education line item in the Department of Education's budget to \$30 million. With Pennsylvania facing a contraction of working age adults, we must find ways to ensure that no Pennsylvanian is left behind. The 1.6 million working age adults who struggle with literacy and basic skills can be part of the solution. All they need is a chance to access education services to build their skills. Adult and Family Literacy Education in Pennsylvania is an entry point into the state's workforce development systems for thousands of Pennsylvanians.

UPMC Presbyterian/Shadyside is one of the largest employers in western PA, with more than 95,000 workers. Our workforce includes entry level positions through highly skilled workers. Our local UPMC EVS Training program is helping adults acquire the basic skills they need to be successful in their jobs and prepare them for building a career pathway at UPMC.

Pennsylvania's investment in Adult and Family Literacy Education is helping thousands go from learning to earning and contributing to our region's prosperity. Additional resources will ensure that these programs reach more people in need and support their ability to get and keep good jobs that support their families. Yet, Adult and Family Literacy Education funding is misaligned with the need. More than 700,000 working age adults in Pennsylvania do not have a high school credential, keeping them out of jobs and job training. More than 700,000 adults do not speak English well or at all, many who are highly skilled such as doctors, nurses, accountants, and other professionals who can only work in entry level jobs because they need to speak, read, and write English. This is what our partners in Adult and Family Literacy Education do – they help those left behind attain a basic education and help the newly arrived learn English and reclaim their careers.

When the Commonwealth invests in Adult and Family Literacy Education, it invests in helping employers like UPMC and various training programs find qualified candidates who can succeed.

Thank you for supporting Adult and Family Literacy Education in Pennsylvania.

Sincerely,



Darnell Grinage  
Senior Director, Environmental Services





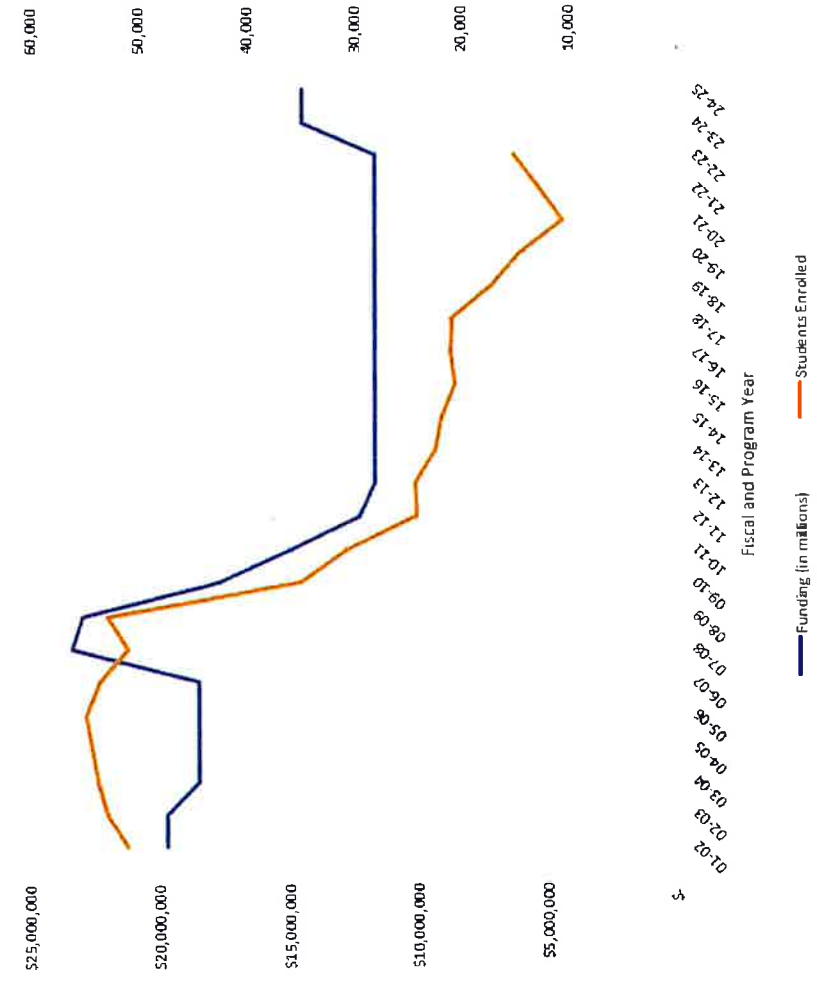
Increase the Adult and Family Education line item by \$7 million to serve more working and job-seeking adults.

- **646,612** working age adults **lack** high school diplomas.
- **387,549** working age adults **do not speak** English well or at all.
- More than **64,000** students **dropped out** of high school in the last five year.

2020 PIAAC DATA: State & County Indicators of Adult Literacy and Numeracy for PA's 9,435,000 residents ages 16-74

- **18%** of Pennsylvanians ages 16-74 are at or below PIAAC proficiency level 1 in literacy – meaning **at risk** for difficulty using or comprehending print material.
- **29%** of Pennsylvanians ages 16-74 are at or below PIAAC proficiency level 1 in numeracy – considered at risk for difficulties with numeracy.

**Adult and Family Literacy Education Funding 2001-2024**





Pennsylvania Association for Adult Continuing Education

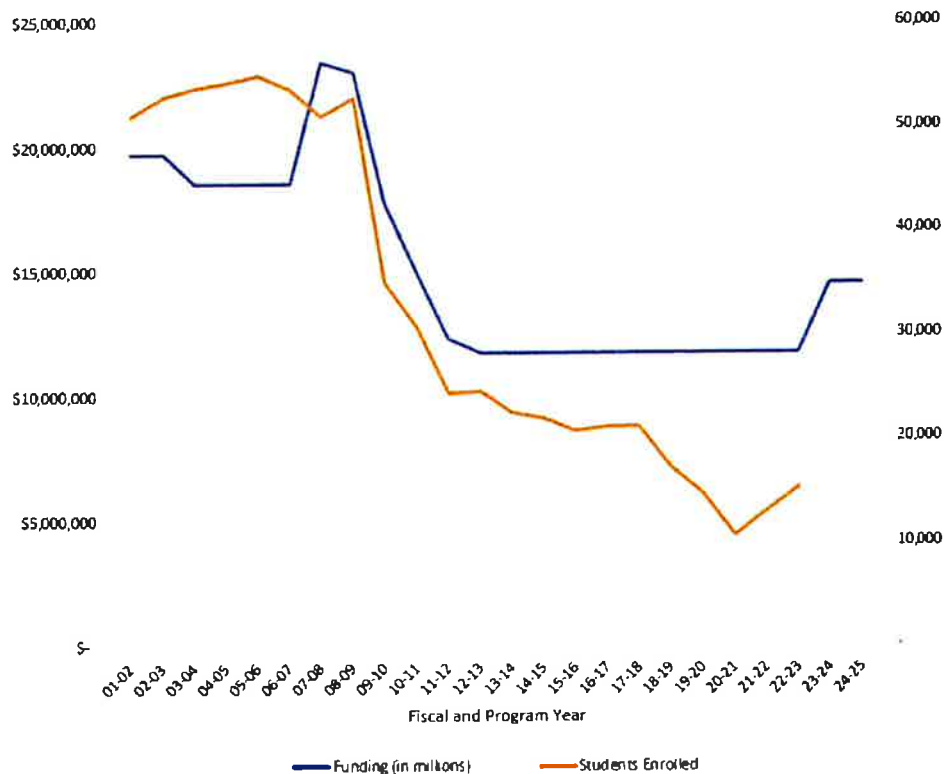
September 2024

ADULT AND FAMILY LITERACY EDUCATION IS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

For Fiscal Year 2025-2026, our goal is to increase the ADULT and FAMILY LITERACY EDUCATION line item to \$23 million.

- By 2026-2027, full restoration of the line to \$30 million so that Pennsylvania will move more adults into middle skills work and help employers fill openings.
- The Adult and Family Literacy line item in the Pennsylvania Department of Education provides the required match for the Federal Title II funding of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA).

The Adult and Family Literacy line item was flat funded for 12 years until the \$3.8 Million increase in the FY 24 budget. The Governor's proposed \$1M increase did not make it into FY25 final budget.



## WHO WE ARE

PAACE (Pennsylvania Association for Adult Continuing Education) is a membership association of professionals in the field of adult basic and continuing education. Our more than 1,200 members work in community-based organizations, school districts, intermediate units and colleges to provide services throughout the Commonwealth. Our mission is to inspire adult education partners through advocacy, networking, and professional development so that adults succeed, and communities thrive.

## THE WORK

Adult and Family Literacy Education expands the talent pipelines for jobs and job training by providing education that under-skilled adults need in order to successfully attain and retain good jobs. Adult and Family Literacy Education programs provide ongoing career pathway support to working adults who need to continue to develop their skills to advance. Pennsylvania must join employers and higher education providers in valuing these critical services and invest in them so that no Pennsylvanian is left behind.

Adult and Family Literacy Education organizations provide a wide range of services designed around the needs of adult learners, including:

- College & Career Readiness (planning & preparation for careers in high-demand industries)
- Adult Basic Education
  - High School Equivalency Test Preparation
  - English for Speakers of Other Languages
  - Basic Academic Skills – Reading, Writing, Mathematics
- Family Literacy
- Health Literacy
- Digital Literacy

## THE NEED

- 18% of Pennsylvania adults have literacy skills at or below the level needed for work, family, and community life. \*
- 646,612 working adults between 18 and 64 do not have a high school credential. \*
- 396,637 have less than a 9th grade education.
- 387,549 do not speak English well or at all.
- 62,459 students dropped out of school between 2018 and 2023.

In the last 2 years, we have received high demand from both American and foreign-born adult learners. This surging need for services has resulted in crowded programs and growing wait lists.

\*Source: <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/piaac/skillsmap/>

## OUR IMPACT

We serve working age adults with significant skills gaps who are typically under-employed and raising families. Participation is at their own pace and often includes breaks of months or years as they balance educational needs with life's demands. These factors influence the field's reported outcomes (see endnote for detail). The majority (66%) of students who continuously attend for at least 60 hours make educational gains equivalent to two K-12 school years – a remarkable accomplishment for them and a significant return on investment for Pennsylvania at an estimated cost of \$2,500 per student.

Adult education programs are not just a second chance at a basic education; for many adults in Pennsylvania, these programs are the last chance. Our programs connect the untapped labor force of under-skilled adults to employers in need of workers.

On behalf of the more than **1.4 million Pennsylvanians** who require adult basic education to earn middle skills jobs, PAACE urges Governor Shapiro and the General Assembly to make these vital investments:

- 1** Increase the Adult and Family Literacy line in the Department of Education budget to \$23 million for the FY 2025-2026 budget, with the goal of reaching \$30 million by 2026-2027. The 2023-2024 increase moved us closer and yet it does not align with the need and the value of these programs. Increasing this investment will enable thousands of additional adults to access services.
- 2** Mobilize unspent dollars to directly support high performing instructional programs through incentive funds.

## END NOTE

In any given year, approximately 66% of the students who persist in adult education for at least 60 hours will make educational gains equivalent of 2 grade levels in K-12 schooling. This is an amazing testament to the dedication and determination of both students and adult educators. Due to the challenges of federal reporting requirements, these impressive results often get overshadowed by the volume of adults that seek out services and end up stepping away before 60 hours of instruction and/or making a learning gain.

Being an adult student is a significant commitment that is not undertaken lightly. In fact, in any given year, approximately half of the adults that seek out our services will step away due to the very real challenges of balancing work, family and their own education. These challenges include shift changes at work, overtime, new jobs, moves, family obligations, illness, and/or lack of transportation and childcare. Federal reporting includes these adults who have not actually persisted, and thus can mislead a reader to think that as few as 44% of adult education students have made a gain.

We hope this context helps you provide further understanding of that data point. Thankfully, adult education staff work with those who are unable to persist to ensure they know they are welcome back when the commitment can be accommodated.

The Adult and Family Literacy Education line of \$16,310,000 includes \$1,050,000 earmarked for HSE testing. The Department of Education is working on a plan to implement an HSE testing fee program for Pennsylvania. Given the huge unmet need for educational programming across the Commonwealth, we urge the Department to deploy any unspent testing funds toward the delivery of educational programming.

Notably, the line also includes funds earmarked for a K-12 after-school program.

For more information, please email Cheryl Hiester at [Cheryl@literacysuccess.org](mailto:Cheryl@literacysuccess.org).