



National Coalition for Literacy

March 9th, 2015

The Honorable Mike Enzi
Chairman
Committee on the Budget
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Price, M.D.
Chairman
Committee on the Budget
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
Ranking Member
Committee on the Budget
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
Ranking Member
Committee on the Budget
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairs and Ranking Members:

The National Coalition for Literacy, a coalition of more than 30 leading national, state, and regional organizations dedicated to advancing adult education, family literacy, and English language acquisition in the U.S., urges you to adopt a budget resolution that supports adequate funding for adult education under Title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

Last year, Congress worked together to pass WIOA on an overwhelmingly bipartisan basis. **However, its effectiveness will be severely impaired if we do not reverse the recent trend of cutting funding for adult education program covered under the new Act.**

The federal investment in adult education state grants has been steadily declining in terms of real dollars since FY 2002. Unlike many other programs, adult education state grants did not have its sequestered funds restored in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2014 Consolidated Appropriations Act. The Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act of 2015 included a \$5 million increase, but that was \$26 million less than the pre-sequestration level of \$595 million. While the president's proposed funding preserves this increase in FY 2016, this meager investment in adult education would continue to support less than 2 million of the 36 million adults who would benefit from these important services. Across the country, prospective students remain on waiting lists, sometimes for more than a year.

The federal investment in adult education under Title II also plays a critical role in spurring state investment in adult education, as states are required to provide a non-federal match for Title II funds awarded. Failure to fully fund Title II at least the authorized levels will discourage state investment in adult education at a time when we should be incentivizing states to increase their levels of support.

In addition, we ask you to provide the appropriations committees with the flexibility to consider **full restoration** of "ability-to-benefit" under the Pell grant program. Prior to July of 2012, students without a high school diploma or its equivalent, if they could demonstrate college readiness, qualified for financial aid under the "ability to benefit" (ATB) provisions in Title IV of the Higher Education Act.

As a shortsighted cost-savings measure, these provisions were eliminated in the FY 2012 omnibus legislation. The Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act of 2015 partially restored ATB for students who are enrolled in an eligible career pathway program. The appropriations committees budget should include the flexibility to fully restore ATB for *all* students.

Most importantly, as you craft the FY2016 budget, we urge you and your colleagues to end the sequester and reverse the damaging budget cuts that have been made to non-defense discretionary programs over the last several years. At a minimum, an allocation for Labor, HHS, and Education programs to at least FY2010 levels would allow for a much-needed re-investment in our nation's adult learners and workers.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at jcarter@literacypolicy.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Carter". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "C".

Jeff Carter
NCL President 2014-2015

Cc: Members, House and Senate Budget Committees