



# COABE

The Voice Of Adult Education

## Who We Are:

COABE is the leading association for adult education, representing more than 82,000 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 more than one million adult learners nationwide. With over 2,300 WIOA Title II programs around the country, COABE members work tirelessly to help underserved adults master the skills they need to compete and build careers along with better futures for themselves, their families, and their communities.

## Funding Request:

### **Invest \$810 million in the Adult Education State Grants program in Fiscal Year (FY) 2026**

- Current funding levels only allow adult education programs to reach approximately 1.1 million of the 43 million Americans with low-literacy skills. Many programs have long waiting lists and few leftover resources to implement innovative technology to accelerate learning.
- Demand for adult education programs is high because of the economic boost these programs provide to participants, employers, communities, and the nation.
- If properly resourced and supported, adult education programs enable learners to gain the skills necessary to succeed in the workforce and earn family-sustaining wages, while providing employers with a pool of skilled workers to fill in-demand jobs.
- By 2030, 50 percent of the workforce will have to reskill. Adult education is a key part of the solution to bridge the skills gap and ensure that American employers can fill open roles with qualified individuals.
- Low literacy costs the U.S. economy approximately \$300 billion each year. Additional support for adult education programs will strengthen our nation's economy by providing millions of adult learners with necessary workforce and life skills, lifting people out of poverty and off government assistance.
- With an increase in funding, local programs will be able to build capacity to serve more learners, hire more full-time teachers and increase retention, thereby boosting the ability of adult education to continue to serve as a critical component of our nation's workforce development system, supporting employers and individuals in every State.
- For too long, we have not seen the kind of investment in adult education that can ensure all those in need of these services have access, and so it is vital that these programs be prioritized now.

## Policy Request:

**Senate:** Support and cosponsor [S. 1400](#), the bipartisan Adult Education WORKS Act, introduced by Senators Jack Reed (D-RI) and Todd Young (R-IN).

**House of Representatives: Support and cosponsor [H.R. 2789](#), the Adult Education WORKS Act, introduced by Representatives Lucy McBath (D-GA) and Frank Mrvan (D-IN).**

- The reauthorization of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) provides a significant opportunity to strengthen our nation's adult education system.
- The Adult Education WORKS Act is a crucial step in addressing the dire need for adult education; the most recent [findings](#) of the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) indicate that low performance in literacy increased from 19 to 28 percent and numeracy from 29 to 34 percent of U.S. adults between 2017 and 2023.
- At the end of last Congress, an agreement between the Senate and the House of Representatives on a WIOA reauthorization bill, [A Stronger Workforce for America Act](#), nearly became law as part of a funding bill. This legislation incorporated COABE-supported priorities included in the bipartisan Adult Education WORKS Act.
- COABE urges Congress to renew its work to pass the WIOA reauthorization and include the remaining key provisions from the bipartisan Adult Education WORKS Act that are critical to updating and strengthening adult education, including:
  - Improving collaboration and coordination between Title I and II programs by adding adult education representation on the state workforce development board;
  - Ensuring workers learn the digital literacy *and* information literacy skills that are in-demand by employers;
  - Expanding integrated education and training programs so learners gain skills and training concurrently with education services;
  - Promoting innovation within the performance accountability system to better measure student and program success; and
  - Ensuring college and career preparation activities are provided by skilled professionals such as college and career navigators.