



Office of Government  
and International Affairs  
1156 15th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20005  
t: 202.785.4200  
f: 202.785.4115  
[www.ajc.org](http://www.ajc.org)

**Statement of  
Richard T. Foltin, Esq.  
Director of National and Legislative Affairs  
Office of Government and International Affairs  
American Jewish Committee**

**Submitted on behalf of the American Jewish Committee to  
The House Committee  
on Education and the Workforce**

**Hearing on  
“Workforce Investment Improvement Act of 2012”**

**April 17, 2012**

**T: (202) 785-5463, F: (202) 659-9896  
e-mail: [foltinr@ajc.org](mailto:foltinr@ajc.org)**

From its founding in 1906, the American Jewish Committee (AJC) has been a strong voice in support of fair and generous treatment of immigrants, participating actively in many of the major immigration debates of our time. AJC continues to reaffirm its commitment to fair and generous immigration policies, as fundamentally good for the United States and consistent with Jewish values. According to Jewish tradition, "strangers" are to be welcomed and valued, as we were once "strangers in the land of Egypt." The Torah tells us: "The strangers who sojourn with you shall be to you as the natives among you, and you shall love them as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Leviticus 19:33-34).

As American Jews, we recall how our parents and grandparents made their way to this country seeking a better life, often arriving without speaking even a word of English. We know that the American Jewish community has prospered because of all that this country has offered us, which included programs that taught English and helped them to integrate, and that same opportunity should be available to new generations of immigrants as well.

We support the Workforce Investment Act of 2012 (H.R.4227) because each day in our congregations, service programs, health-care facilities, and schools we witness the human consequences of the lack of investment in new Americans. As the English language learner (ELL) population continues to grow, it is critical that Congress support English language acquisition and integration. According to the Census Bureau, more than 19% of the population (54.8 million) speaks a language other than English at home. In spite of this fact, there continues to be one- to three-year waitlists for English literacy education in many areas. This legislation acknowledges that immigrants want to learn English, become citizens, and participate fully in their adopted country, but are frequently unable to do so because the programs they need are underfunded or non-existent.

These new immigrants deserve the opportunity to succeed, regardless of the outcome of current immigration debates. We support policies and measures which honor our heritage as a country that welcomes immigrants. We must ensure that we continue to be a nation that embraces newcomers and facilitates their integration into our society as full and equal partners. That is why we urge you to support the provisions of the Workforce Investment Act that encourage adult English language education, which would go a long way to help with immigrant integration and bolstering America's role as a leader in the competitive global economy.

Thank you for considering our views on this matter.