



Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy

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Gail Spangenberg
President

March 27, 2012

The Honorable John Tierney
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Rep. Tierney:

I am writing on behalf of the members of the National Commission on Adult Literacy and as president of CAAL, a national leadership organization dedicated to advancing adult education, adult ESL, and workforce skills in America. Specifically, we wish to express our support for HR 4227, your 2012 bill to reform and reauthorize the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. We deeply appreciate your leadership and that of Representative Miller's and Hinojosa's in developing and introducing this important bill.

We are especially pleased that HR 4227 incorporates large portions of the Adult Education and Economic Growth Act introduced by Rep. Ruben Hinojosa, which builds on the recommendations of the National Commission's *Reach Higher, America* report issued in 2008. While we can always offer suggestions on some of the Bill's provisions, there is much in it that we applaud. We are pleased to support HR4227.

We appreciate that it reflects recognition of Adult Education as a core program; that it shows understanding of both the differences and similarities of adult education and workforce education in its provisions for Title I and II; that it includes strong provisions to support the crucial role of technology, national leadership activities, and comprehensive state planning; that it gives priority and definition to Career Pathways for both Title I and Title II programs, in a way that includes roles for adult education; that it restores an independent National Institute dedicated solely to adults; that it improves the Adult Education Performance Accountability System by recognizing work readiness as an important outcome; and other features.

As I believe you know, other nations are fast outstripping America in boosting the educational levels of their young and working age adults. They are showing consistent decade-to-decade progress in enhancing the education levels of their adult populations, while the U.S. is losing ground. Of the 30 nations in the OECD free market, the United States is the only nation where young adults are less educated than the previous generation.

Further, a huge number of adults need help with their job and college readiness skills upgrading. About 88 million adults face at least one major educational barrier -- no high school diploma, no college, or lack of adequate ESL proficiency -- that limits their access to needed college, job training, and jobs. As *Reach Higher, America* stresses, neglecting the adult population in need of basic education, we also harm the prospects of the next generation. Moreover, one in four working

families in our country is low income, and one in every five children lives in poverty. Parents and caregivers in many of these households lack the education and skills to move into jobs that pay a family-sustaining wage. Adult education can move these people toward the postsecondary education or job training that will help them out of low-wage jobs, and, in the process, improve the learning and employment prospects of their children.

It is well documented that America is losing its place as a world leader in education and becoming less competitive every day, and that we need a strong adult education and workforce skills system to turn back this tide. Yet our existing adult education system presently lacks the resources and framework to prepare adults for the workplace or transitioning to college. HR 4227 is a highly important step in this direction.

Your bill recognizes that if we are to remain competitive in this increasingly globalized economy, we need to reform and grow the Adult Education system to reach massive numbers of adults. We must ensure that once these adult learners are re-engaged in further education, more will be ready for college and job training, successfully complete their degrees or certificates, and end up in jobs or better jobs that will pay them enough to support their families.

HR 4227 will promote more comprehensive planning, with key stakeholders at the table—including greater involvement of business, workforce, and state agencies as well as adult education to assure that many more adults, both potential and incumbent workers, are better served and moved effectively along to pathways to good jobs and education.

We know that Representatives Foxx, McKeon, and Heck have also written serious bills that attempt to address the need to improve our workforce system. While we have concerns about how they address the Adult Education system, we believe these differences can be addressed as the process unfolds.

The nation needs a workforce system that meets the needs of the 21st Century. We compliment you on your efforts to create opportunity and jobs for our nation's workforce.

We also hope that you and your colleagues will be able to proceed on a bipartisan basis to reform and reauthorize the Workforce Investment Act in 2012. We look forward to working with you to achieve this goal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Gail Frazier". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.



Members of National Commission on Adult Literacy

David Perdue, former Chairman & CEO, Dollar General Corporation (Commission Chairman); international businessman

Morton Bahr, President Emeritus, Communications Workers of America

Hon. Gerald Baliles, Director, Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia; former Governor of Virginia

David Beré, former President and Chief Operating Officer, Dollar General Corporation

Robert Bickerton, Sr. Associate Commissioner of Education for the Commonwealth of MA

Marion Crain, Director, Center on Poverty, Work, and Opportunity, University of North Carolina

John Comings, Director, National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, Graduate School of Education, Harvard University

Sharon Darling, President and Founder, National Center for Family Literacy

Samuel Halperin, Senior Fellow and Founder, American Youth Policy Forum

Paul Harrington, President and CEO, Reebok International (currently president and CEO, Eastern-Bell Sports)

George Kessinger, President and CEO, Goodwill Industries International, Inc.

Cheryl D. King (Study Director), former Deputy Secretary and Commissioner of Adult Education and Workforce Development in Kentucky; currently President of Kentucky Wesleyan College

Bridget Lamont, Vice Chair, U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science; past Chair and current member, Illinois Educational Labor Relations Board

Hon. Ray Marshall, Rapoport Centennial Chair in Economics and Public Affairs, University of Texas; former U.S. Secretary of Labor

Gail Mellow, President, LaGuardia Community College

Owen Modeland, President, Correctional Education Association; Supt of Schools, Oklahoma Department of Corrections

Mark Musick, James Quillen Chair, East Tennessee State University; President Emeritus, Southern Regional Education Board (SREB); chaired Board of National Assessment of Educational Progress under three presidents

Karen Narasaki, President, Asian American Justice Center; Vice Chair, Leadership Conference on Civil Rights; Vice President of Coalition for Comprehensive Immigration Reform

Juan Olivarez, President, Grand Rapids Community College; member, Board of National Institute for Literacy

Camille Preus, Commissioner, Oregon Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development; recent President, National Council on State Directors of Community Colleges; Chair-elect of Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education

Hon. Tom Sawyer, Ohio State Senator; former member U.S. House of Representatives. Author, National Literacy Act of 1991

Hon. George Staples, Director General of U.S. Foreign Service and Assistant Secretary for Human Resources, U.S. Department of State (retired July 2007); former U.S. Ambassador to many countries

Gail Spangenberg (Commission Manager), President, Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy; former operating head, Business Council for Effective Literacy

Andrew Sum, Professor of Labor Economics, Director of Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University

Robert Wedgeworth, Past President & CEO, Proliteracy Worldwide (retired June 2007); former President, American Library Association

William White, President and Chairman, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation