



June 1, 2010

Dear Member of Congress:

The Association of Adult Literacy Professional Developers (AALPD) and the Commission on Adult Basic Education (COABE) have been working closely with the National Coalition for Literacy<sup>1</sup> to recommend specific language changes for WIA reauthorization. We are concerned about the dearth of resources available for practitioner professional development and what is needed to improve the quality of the adult education teaching profession. As you reauthorize the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), **we ask that you change Title II State Leadership funds from a maximum of 12.5% to a minimum of 15%** so that teachers have the resources they need to help adult students succeed<sup>2</sup>. We the undersigned support this position and urge you to make this change.

**Facts:**

- ***Professional development, which is provided for under State Leadership, is the primary mechanism for preparing adult educators with the knowledge and skills about instructional practices that spur student achievement.*** Research shows that most adult educators have limited formal education specifically related to teaching adults. Few states require an adult education teaching certification. Thus, practitioners rely on professional development to help them use data to improve student outcomes and pursue training specific to their instructional needs.
- ***Professional development opportunities decreased with the passage of WIA in 1998 while the demand for professional development increased.*** Under the 1991 National Literacy Act (NLA), states were required to spend a *minimum of 15%* of their adult basic education funding on professional development and research activities, *two-thirds of which was required to be spent on teacher training*. When Congress reconfigured the NLA into the WIA (1998), states were only allowed to spend a *maximum of 12.5%* on 'leadership' for a wide variety of state activities, *with no minimum requirement for professional development*. WIA increased accountability and added program improvement requirements while reducing funds available for training needed to incorporate those changes. *The increased need for accountability training made fewer funds available for responsive, instruction-based professional development* designed to help practitioners improve practice, such as training in reading instruction or learning disabilities. States need adequate resources to both comply with accountability requirements and to be responsive to instruction-based professional development needs.

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<sup>1</sup> NCL members include: American Association for Adult and Continuing Education ◦ American Council on Education, GED Testing Service ◦ American Institutes for Research ◦ American Library Association ◦ Center for Literacy Studies, University of Tennessee ◦ Commission on Adult Basic Education ◦ Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy and the Goodling Institute for Research, Pennsylvania State University ◦ International Reading Association ◦ National Center for Family Literacy ◦ National Council of State Directors of Adult Education ◦ ProLiteracy Worldwide ◦ Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. ◦ World Education.

<sup>2</sup> NCL Professional Quality Principles: [http://www.national-coalition-literacy.org/ProfessionalQualityPrinciples\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.national-coalition-literacy.org/ProfessionalQualityPrinciples_FINAL.pdf)

- ***The demand for quality professional development is increasing.*** With the increased focus on teacher quality, career and college pathway services, the need to prepare adults to transition to postsecondary education and training, and integrating technology into teaching and learning, funding for high quality professional development should increase to meet the demand.
- ***National activities require a substantial investment of professional development that state leadership dollars are stretched thin to provide.*** It costs states and programs significantly to participate in high-quality, national professional development activities. They must train the trainers, convene the practitioners and provide the materials, pay travel and release time to attend, including paying for substitutes and paid planning time to implement what they learn. Research shows that professional development leading to teacher change takes significant investment in time and long term support to evidence improvement in practices.
- ***Access to professional development, particularly in-service training, is limited by teachers' part-time status (OVAE reports that 82% of teachers are part-time) and lack of paid professional development release time.*** Even if more quality professional development was offered, adult educators, who are already underpaid and overworked, cannot afford to participate if they are not paid release time to attend.

#### **Take Action:**

In addition to **changing State Leadership funding to a minimum of 15%**, consider how else WIA reauthorization can improve the ***professional quality*** of the adult education workforce. ***Professional quality***—including both teacher quality and the working conditions professionals need—is critical for advancing the adult education and literacy system.

- Provide paid professional development release time for practitioners and allowances for hiring substitute teachers, where applicable, to provide release time for practitioners to attend professional development.
- Provide paid planning time so that adult educators can implement what they learned through professional development.
- Offer tuition stipends to attract college graduates who then get degrees in adult education and stay in the field for a period of five years.
- Establish pathways to careers through credentials, degrees, and career ladders that are linked to compensation commensurate with experience and qualifications. Establish career ladders for teachers who then become mentors of other teachers and who take leadership roles within the program to become a master teacher. Provide opportunities for diverse providers to become highly qualified in their roles.
- Provide incentives for hiring more full time (versus part time) staff.
- Provide for research that studies the intersection of professional development, working conditions, credentialing and career advancement with student achievement to guide policy decisions.

- Provide three-year grants to states to improve the quality of the adult education workforce by establishing State Adult Literacy Professional Development and Career System Task Forces and supporting the activities of such task forces. These task forces would identify best practices in the field for improving the professional quality of the adult education workforce.

We, the undersigned, appreciate your attention to these matters. Please contact Jackie Taylor, COABE Policy Chair at [jackie@jataylor.net](mailto:jackie@jataylor.net) with questions.