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Testimony by the New York City Coalition for Adult Literacy (NYCCAL)
Joint Education Committee Budget Hearing for the Fiscal Year 2016
New York State Budget

Honorable John Flanagan, Chair, Senate Education Committee
Honorable Catherine Nolan, Chair, Assembly Education Committee
Honorable John DeFrancisco, Senate Finance Committee
Honorable Herman Farrell, Jr., Assembly Ways and Means Committee

Agudath Israel of America
Bronx Works
Catholic Charities
Chinatown Manpower Project
Coalition for Asian American Children and Families
Community Service Society
Cypress Hills Local Dev Corp
The Doe Fund
Edith & Carl Marks Jewish Community House of Bensonhurst
FEGS Health and Human Services
Fifth Avenue Committee
Fortune Society
HANAC
Highbridge Community Life Center
International Center of CCCS
Jacob A. Riis Neighborhood Settlement House
Jewish Community Council of Greater Coney Island
Jewish Community Center of Staten Island
LaGuardia Community College Adult Community Learning
Lehman College Adult Learning Center
Literacy Assistance Center
Literacy Partners
Lutheran Family Health Centers Adult and Family Education
Make the Road New York
Maura Clarke-Ita Ford (MCIF) Center
Neighborhood Family Services Coalition
New York Immigration Coalition
Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation
NYC College of Technology Adult Learning Center
New York City Employment & Training Coalition
Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow
Phipps Community Development Corporation
Project Reach Youth
Queens Community House
Riverside Language Program
Shorefront YM-YWHA
Turning Point
UAW Region 9A Education Fund
UJA-Federation of New York
Union Settlement Association, Inc.
United Neighborhood Houses
University Settlement Adult Literacy Program
YMCA of Greater NY

The **New York City Coalition for Adult Literacy (NYCCAL)** is comprised of teachers, managers, students, and allies from community-based organizations, advocacy groups, public libraries, and colleges in the City University of New York. NYCCAL advocates for an adult literacy system that provides quality, comprehensive, and accessible educational services to current students and other adults who require it. NYCCAL believes that being able to read and write, learn English, obtain a High School Equivalency diploma, and enter training and post secondary education are the rights of every New Yorker and the cornerstone to an equitable and just society.

Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Sandy Myers and I am an Advocacy Advisor at UJA-Federation of New York. I am testifying today on behalf of the New York City Coalition for Adult Literacy (NYCCAL). NYCCAL is a coalition of teachers, managers, students, and allies from community-based organizations, advocacy groups, public libraries, and colleges in the City University of New York (CUNY). We advocate for an adult literacy system that provides quality, comprehensive, and accessible educational services to current students and other adults who need it.

For low-income adults in New York, education is the key to securing employment, building a foothold in the job market, helping their children succeed in school, or acquiring the language skills needed to navigate their way through day to day life. Supporting an educated, skilled workforce is critical to creating and sustaining a thriving economy – one that can attract new and diverse employers and generate the revenues needed to support a high quality of life for New York's residents and visitors.

In New York City, four main sectors provide adult literacy classes: community-based organizations (CBOs), libraries, CUNY, and the DOE, and include various types of instruction, including English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL), Adult Basic Education (ABE), High School Equivalency (HSE), and Basic Education in the Native Language (BENL).

To provide this range of services and meet the unmet need, NYCCAL is recommending a \$10 million investment in Adult Literacy Education (ALE) and a \$5 million investment in a new High School Equivalency transition fund to support professional development and computer technology.

Need and Benefit:

Across the City and State, increased demand for literacy services has exceeded capacity in programs. In New York City, there are 1.7 million New Yorkers who lack either an HSE, English proficiency, or both. Statewide, 3 million adults currently function at a below basic level of literacy according to the State assessment.

NYC is home to over 3 million foreign born residents, which represents 37% of the City's population. Our City's immigrant population is the largest and most diverse of any city in the nation. The immigrant population more than doubled over the past four decades, which accounts for all of New York City's population growth during that period.¹ While not all of our City's immigrants are in need of adult education services, they do make up a large part of the need.

Investments in adult education benefit the learners, their families, our economy, and society as a whole. While higher education is increasingly seen as necessary to achieving individual financial security and local economic growth, for many New Yorkers the pathway to postsecondary success has to start with basic education, English language literacy, and High School Equivalency preparation. These direct economic benefits include increased employment, higher salaries that lead to more consumer spending and increased tax revenue. Attainment of a high school degree or its equivalent also reduces social welfare costs, by lowering the need for public assistance. For example, every high school credential earned generates \$324,000 in net benefits for the City, through reduced reliance on public benefits (\$135,000) and increased taxes paid (\$190,000) as a result of higher earnings.² Additionally, for adults that are able to complete high school or earn a HSE, median wages are 25% higher. Helping adults finish their primary education better prepares them to enroll in training programs, pursue college, or advance in their careers.

Budget Context:

Despite the clear value of investments in adult education, and the demonstrated need and demand for those investments among adult learners, New York City and State funding for adult education has fallen significantly in the last few years. Additionally, funding for community-based organizations has been meager compared to the amount given to other sectors, thereby forcing them to compete for significantly and proportionally less.

Currently NYSED's primary funding streams for adult literacy programming are the Employment Preparation Education Program (EPE) (approximately \$96 million statewide; limited only to DOE and the Consortium for Worker Education (CWE) in NYC), Workforce Investment Act (approximately \$36 million statewide in federal pass-through funds, with allowances for large entities such as the DOE or CUNY to apply for up to 25% of the total NYC allocation), and Adult Literacy Education (approximately \$5 to 6 million statewide, not available to DOE in NYC).

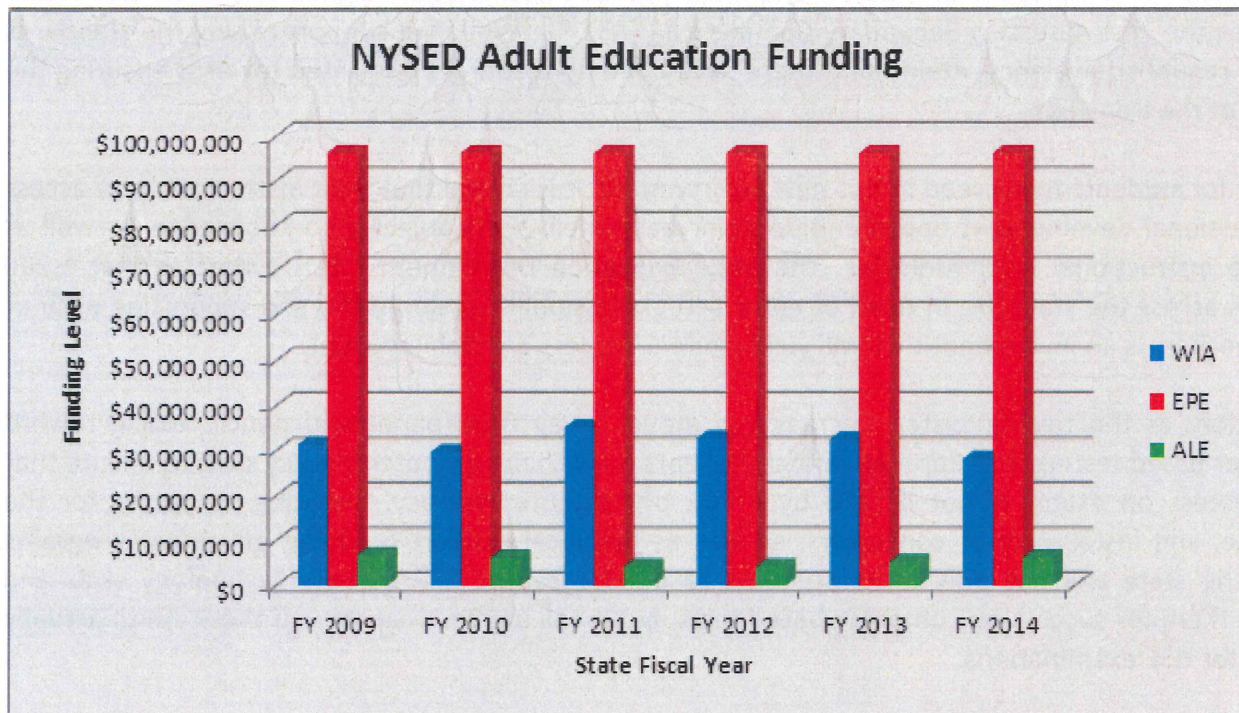
¹ Thomas P. DiNapoli, "The Role of Immigrants in the New York City Economy."

http://osc.state.ny.us/reports/immigration/NYC_Immigration_Rpt_8-2014.pdf

² Lazar Treschan and David Jason Fischer, "From Basic Skills to Better Futures: Generating Economic Dividends for New York City"

<http://www.passged.com/media/pdf/research/From-Basic-Skills-to-Better-Futures.pdf>

In the SFY 16 budget, the Governor proposed funding Adult Literacy Education (ALE) at \$5.236 million. This is level with the amount proposed last year, but \$1 million short than what was in the final budget. We hope the legislature will not only continue their prior investment of an additional \$1 million, but also increase the size of the funding to ensure that more adults can be served.



Budget Recommendations:

I want to note that NYCCAL is partnering with Literacy New York on our advocacy this year and both groups share the below two priorities to support our State’s community-based adult education providers.

Recommendation 1: Invest \$10 million in the Adult Literacy Education (ALE) funding stream to create 3,000 new classroom seats. The represents a \$3.7 million expansion from last year’s budget and a \$4.7 million investment from the Governor’s proposed budget.

Despite the significant cost to New York’s economy of having a large section of the workforce without English proficiency (Spanish-speaking adults with limited English proficiency lose approximately \$3,000/year in earnings as compared to their peers), investments in improving the literacy and high school credential attainment among this population have been flat or only seen nominal growth. **Only an estimated 4% of those in need of programs are able to access state-funded ESOL classes.**

Given that New York subsidizes the exam cost for every HSE test-taker, and pass rates are 23% higher for those in preparation programs versus walk-in testers, it is in the state’s interest to ensure ESOL and HSE preparation classes are available to all eligible adults.

Recommendation 2: Invest \$5 million in a new High School Equivalency (HSE) Transition Fund to support professional development and computer technology. This request was echoed by the Board of Regents in their 2015-2016 State budget priorities.

In January 2014, New York took a historic step in being among the first states in the nation to phase out the GED® and replace it with a new and more rigorous examination aligned to the Common Core known as the Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC™). While we support raising the standards for high school equivalency attainment, there have been no resources dedicated towards ensuring the success of the transition.

In order for students to succeed in this new environment, it is critical that their instructors have access to professional development opportunities to increase their own subject-area knowledge, as well as effective instructional methodologies. The State Education Department (SED) estimates that 1,200 teachers across the state are in need of enhanced professional development, and supporting each of these teachers is an investment that will yield student success and achievement.

In addition, as the testing system increasingly moves away from paper and pencil testing toward computer based testing, it is imperative that students build their computer literacy skills to ensure that their success on exams is not limited by a lack of computer literacy. Investing resources for the purchase, and installation of computers, as well as technical support for adult education programs across the state will not only allow students to build essential 21st century technology skills and prepare them for success on computer based tests, but it will increase capacity of the State to actually administer HSE examinations.

Impact of Administrative Relief, DACA, and DAPA

President Obama's 2012 creation of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program made education a central component of a federal immigration program with its requirement that a young person be graduated from high school or be currently enrolled in school. The flexibility offered for "currently in school" to include enrollment in a program that leads to high school equivalency or an education, literacy, or career training program (including vocational training) resulted in an increase of young adults enrolling in a variety of adult education classes. With the President's November 2014 announcement expanding DACA and creating a new program for the parents of US citizens and lawful permanent residents, Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA), we anticipate the demand for individuals seeking ESOL and other basic adult education classes to increase significantly. According to the Migration Policy Institute, 338,000 New Yorkers stand to benefit from expanded DACA or DAPA, which offers an unprecedented opportunity to allow those individuals to gain the necessary skills and competencies to enter and grow in the workforce.

Conclusion

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify before you today. We look forward to the continued support of the Assembly and Senate and hope that we can work together to best support our City's adult learners.