

On behalf the University Settlement Adult Literacy Program, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the importance of adult literacy education for our students. University Settlement has been serving residents of New York on the Lower East Side for over 125 years, and our program in particular serves around 400 immigrant New Yorkers per year, helping them not only with English but also helping prepare them for the workforce and higher education.

As a member of the New York City Coalition for Adult Literacy (NYCCAL), comprised of adult literacy teachers, managers, students, and allies from over 40 community-based organizations, CUNY campuses, and library programs across New York City, we believe that the ability to read and write, learn English, obtain a High School Equivalency, and enter training and post-secondary education is the right of every New Yorker, and the cornerstone to an equitable and just society. NYCCAL advocates for an adult literacy system that provides quality, comprehensive, and accessible educational services to all New Yorkers who need them.

With over 3.5 million New Yorkers—immigrants and native-born alike—lacking English proficiency, a high school diploma or both, our State has a long way to go in fostering opportunities for all to truly succeed.

Adult Literacy Education (ALE)

ALE funds English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Adult Basic Education (ABE), and High School Equivalency (HSE) preparation classes. Together, these programs strengthen the literacy skills and credentials and increase employment and earnings potential of adult learners across New York State.

However, the Governor's Executive Budget proposes to cut the \$1.5 million added by the Legislature in the FY2018-19 Enacted Budget, which would reduce ALE funding to \$6.3 million. We respectfully request your support for the restoration of \$1.5 million and the investment of an additional \$7.5 million in ALE programs. This investment would raise ALE funding to \$15.3 million.

This money is crucial for our students—students like Lina Chen, who says, “I have studied English for more than two years at University Settlement. I couldn't speak English when I came to America. I didn't know how to communicate with others. But I'm lucky in that I came to this school... The teacher taught us how to think in English and watch movies in English when we are at home. The teacher also taught us how to read children's books. Before at my workplace, I didn't feel confident enough yet to answer my customers. Since I began to learn English, I can communicate with customers to solve some problems at work. It's not as scary as before.”

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on adult literacy education programs. We look forward to working with you to ensure that our students will continue to have access to these crucial programs that provide a pathway to economic mobility, social integration, parent-child engagement, improved health outcomes and improved community safety.

Thank you,

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