



Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy
1221 Avenue of the Americas – 44th Floor New York, NY 10020

May 23, 2014

Senator Tom Harkin, Chairman
Senate HELP Committee

Senator Lamar Alexander
Ranking Member, Senate HELP Committee

Senator Patty Murray
Chairman, Senate Budget Committee
Member, Senate HELP Committee

Senator Johnny Isakson
Ranking Member, Senate HELP Subcommittee
On Employment and Workplace Safety

Rep. John Kline
Chairman, House Committee on
Education and the Workforce

Rep. George Miller
Ranking Member, House Committee on
Education and the Workforce

Rep. Virginia Foxx
Chairwoman, Higher Education & Workforce
Training Subcommittee, House Committee on
Education and the Workforce

Rep. Rubén Hinojosa
Ranking Member, Higher Education & Workforce
Training Subcommittee, House Committee on
Education and the Workforce

Dear Honorable Senators and Representatives:

On behalf of CAAL, members of its Board of Directors, and members of the National Commission on Adult Literacy, I am pleased to write in strong support of your bipartisan Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. It is a substantial, much-needed, and well-informed crafting of a significantly new approach to investing in America's competitiveness and meeting our human resource development needs.

My colleagues and I are deeply interested in Titles I and II of WIOA. As a community of people with passion and a special focus on Adult Education, we commend you especially for the provisions of Title II. You are future-thinking in redirecting our Adult Education system toward a larger college and job readiness role. You wisely acknowledge the vital importance of distance learning and technology, comprehensive state planning with all stakeholders including business at the table, collaboration, accountability, and relevant performance criteria. You also provide for essential tie-ins to Title I, recognizing that Adult Education, as the first line of access for the lowest-skilled adults, is a crucial part of the nation's overall employability and human resource development effort.

We note that the funding provided in WIOA for Adult Education would grow somewhat each year between now and 2020, which reflects welcomed recognition of Adult Education's funding needs. We commend you for that. At the same time, we realize that for Adult Education to fully meet its role and Congressional intent, substantially increased funding will be needed because Adult Education is a severely underfunded enterprise and its desired outreach and capacity to innovate are restricted by that reality.

The recent data findings of the Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) alone supports the need for a far higher level of investment in our Adult Education system. Other recent analyses by CAAL and other national leadership organizations reinforce the seriousness of our challenge. And the National Commission on Adult Literacy considers the adult basic skills problems to be of such enormous scope that it has recommended a national response on the order of a Marshall Plan.

We will be pleased to work with you to help achieve a level of funding more commensurate with the need. We will also do our part to help ensure that in its implementation WIOA will be equitable and sensitive in service to those most in need of services and that Adult Education will not be unintentionally handicapped by any of the bill's provisions.

This is a historic moment! We want to express our support in the strongest possible way for your enormous accomplishment, a victory for groups that have worked with Congressional leaders for so long to reach this point, and a victory for our nation. We appreciate the difficult nature of the conciliation process and your collective achievement in crafting this bipartisan bill. We are greatly encouraged and applaud your leadership.

We are proud to be a part of the vision you so fully set forth in WIOA.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Gail Spangenberg". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Gail Spangenberg