



Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy

1221 Avenue of the Americas - 44<sup>th</sup> Fl New York, NY 10020

Gail Spangenberg  
*President*

October 25, 2011

The Honorable Dennis Rehberg  
Chairman, House Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education, and Related Agencies

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Democratic Member

Dear Representatives Rehberg and DeLauro:

I am writing on behalf of the members of the recent National Commission on Adult Literacy, whose report, *Reach Higher, America: Overcoming Crisis in the U.S. Workforce* (2008) addresses our need for a more competitive workforce. All Commission members retain a deep ongoing interest and active involvement in the adult education and workforce development affairs of our nation.

We consider it highly important for the Fiscal 2012 Labor-HHS-Education bill and deficit reduction plans to include meaningful investments in the services and activities that are needed to help America get back to work, and it is equally important to ensure that American workers will be able to acquire the skills and training they need to fill jobs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Thus, we want to urge in the strongest possible way that FY12 appropriation levels for adult education not only be maintained but increased.

*Reach Higher, America* makes it clear that other nations are fast outstripping America in boosting the educational levels of our young and working age adults, which endangers our global competitiveness. This is alarming for a number of reasons important to America's future and well-being, especially because it has long been known, and our report reinforces, that education levels relate to employment levels and income.

Today, two-thirds of the American workforce is already beyond the reach of the schools. Nearly half of the U.S. workforce, about 88 million adults aged 18 to 64, face at least one major educational barrier—no high school diploma, high school graduation but poor basic skills, and/or challenges in their ability to speak, read, or write English—which limits their readiness for needed postsecondary education, job training, and jobs. This includes some 50 million English-speaking adults who have a high school diploma but have never attended college (many have limited skills proficiency), about 18 million adults who speak English but lack a high school diploma, and another 18 million who have limited English language skills (many also with low literacy levels).

Yet our current federal adult education system reaches only about 3 million adults annually and only one in four adults with less than a high school education participates in any kind of further education or training. We should also be stunned by these facts from the Commission's report: 1 in 3 young adults drop out of high school and, of the 30 nations in the OECD free market, the U.S. is the only nation where young adults are less educated than the previous generation.

If America fails to educate new workers from these adult ranks, large numbers of them will become a drain on the economy rather than a positive economic force. And it does not have to be that way. For these reasons, we are disappointed that the House Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations subcommittee proposes only to freeze Adult Education at the FY2011 level.

It is absolutely essential to have a robust adult education system if we are to achieve our nation's economic goals. It will be impossible to create a workforce skilled to compete in the global arena if we focus only on secondary schools and postsecondary institutions, and neglect the third leg of our educational system, adult education. The Bureau of Labor Statistics forecasts that about 40 percent of job openings over the next decade will require workers with some postsecondary education. One in four working families in our country is low income, and postsecondary education or training can be a ticket out for low-wage workers seeking better jobs. As *The Wall Street Journal* recently noted, employers are now paying college-educated workers 75 percent more than those with only a high school diploma. Moreover, there is a skills shortage in many sectors and regions. Waiting for new graduates is not an option, because these are jobs that must be filled today.

Properly funding the adult education system would yield fiscal and social benefits valued at many times the amount invested because better-educated and more literate adults earn far more than their less educated counterparts. Having a better-educated workforce would add hundreds of billions of dollars annually in GDP growth, personal incomes, increased tax receipts, and savings on incarceration and health care. For example:

- **\$848 billion**—increase in personal income in the US if all adults aged 25 to 64 had at least an associate degree.
- **\$191 billion**—increase in personal income in the US if all adults had a high school diploma or equivalent
- Up to **\$1.4 billion** per year in savings in reduced costs from crime if the high school completion rate increased by just 1 percent for all men aged 20 to 60.
- **\$900,000**—how much more an adult holding a bachelor's degree would contribute to the tax coffers of federal, state, and local governments, versus someone without a high school diploma.

Unfortunately, support for our workforce system has declined dramatically over time, both in an absolute sense (adjusted for inflation) and especially relative to the size of our

economy and workforce. According to Professor Harry Holzer of Georgetown University, "since 1980 WIA expenditures (compared to its predecessor programs, CETA and JTPA) have fallen by as much as 90 percent, while our economy has doubled in size and our workforce has grown by nearly half."

We call upon your leadership and commitment to support funding for our adult education and workforce system and to recognize this education imperative as a national priority. We firmly believe that failure to invest in these vital services, and to improve alignment, focus, and access, will ultimately cost us far more than we will save by making unwise budget cuts now.

We recognize the many constraints you face in meeting competing social and educational needs, but we hope you will approach the adult education challenge with unflinching determination to meet our basic human resource development needs. We cannot meet our shared economic goals without strong support for our currently underfunded adult education system.

Thank you very much for your attention.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Gail Granger". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name "Gail Granger".

Copies to: Reps. Jerry Lewis, Rodney Alexander, Jack Kingston, Kay Granger, Michael Simpson, Jeff Flake, Cynthia Lummis, Nita Lowey, Jesse Jackson, Jr., Lucille Roybal-Allard, and Barbara Lee



Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy

1221 Avenue of the Americas - 44<sup>th</sup> Fl New York, NY 10020

Gail Spangenberg  
*President*

October 25, 2011

The Honorable Tom Harkin  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education, and Related Agencies  
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Ranking Minority Leader

Dear Senators Harkin and Shelby:

I am writing on behalf of the members of the recent National Commission on Adult Literacy, whose report, *Reach Higher, America: Overcoming Crisis in the U.S. Workforce* (2008) addresses our need for a more competitive workforce. All Commission members retain a deep ongoing interest and active involvement in the adult education and workforce development affairs of our nation.

We consider it highly important for the Fiscal 2012 Labor-HHS-Education bill and deficit reduction plans to include meaningful investments in the services and activities that are needed to help America get back to work, and it is equally important to ensure that American workers will be able to acquire the skills and training they need to fill jobs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Thus, we want to urge in the strongest possible way that FY12 appropriation levels for adult education not only be maintained but increased.

*Reach Higher, America* makes it clear that other nations are fast outstripping America in boosting the educational levels of our young and working age adults, which endangers our global competitiveness. This is alarming for a number of reasons important to America's future and well-being, especially because it has long been known, and our report reinforces, that education levels relate to employment levels and income.

Today, two-thirds of the American workforce is already beyond the reach of the schools. Nearly half of the U.S. workforce, about 88 million adults aged 18 to 64, face at least one major educational barrier—no high school diploma, high school graduation but poor basic skills, and/or challenges in their ability to speak, read, or write English—which limits their readiness for needed postsecondary education, job training, and jobs. This includes some 50 million English-speaking adults who have a high school diploma but have never attended college (many have limited skills proficiency), about 18 million adults who speak English but lack a high school diploma, and another 18 million who have limited English language skills (many also with low literacy levels).

Yet our current federal adult education system reaches only about 3 million adults annually and only one in four adults with less than a high school education participates in any kind of further education or training. We should also be stunned by these facts from the Commission's report: 1 in 3 young adults drop out of high school and, of the 30 nations in the OECD free market, the U.S. is the only nation where young adults are less educated than the previous generation.

If America fails to educate new workers from these adult ranks, large numbers of them will become a drain on the economy rather than a positive economic force. And it does not have to be that way. For these reasons, we are disappointed that the Senate Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations subcommittee proposes only to freeze Adult Education at the FY2011 level.

It is absolutely essential to have a robust adult education system if we are to achieve our nation's economic goals. It will be impossible to create a workforce skilled to compete in the global arena if we focus only on secondary schools and postsecondary institutions, and neglect the third leg of our educational system, adult education. The Bureau of Labor Statistics forecasts that about 40 percent of job openings over the next decade will require workers with some postsecondary education. One in four working families in our country is low income, and postsecondary education or training can be a ticket out for low-wage workers seeking better jobs. As *The Wall Street Journal* recently noted, employers are now paying college-educated workers 75 percent more than those with only a high school diploma. Moreover, there is a skills shortage in many sectors and regions. Waiting for new graduates is not an option, because these are jobs that must be filled today.

Properly funding the adult education system would yield fiscal and social benefits valued at many times the amount invested because better-educated and more literate adults earn far more than their less educated counterparts. Having a better-educated workforce would add hundreds of billions of dollars annually in GDP growth, personal incomes, increased tax receipts, and savings on incarceration and health care. For example:

- **\$848 billion**—increase in personal income in the US if all adults aged 25 to 64 had at least an associate degree.
- **\$191 billion**—increase in personal income in the US if all adults had a high school diploma or equivalent
- Up to **\$1.4 billion** per year in savings in reduced costs from crime if the high school completion rate increased by just 1 percent for all men aged 20 to 60.
- **\$900,000**—how much more an adult holding a bachelor's degree would contribute to the tax coffers of federal, state, and local governments, versus someone without a high school diploma.

Unfortunately, support for our workforce system has declined dramatically over time, both in an absolute sense (adjusted for inflation) and especially relative to the size of our

economy and workforce. According to Professor Harry Holzer of Georgetown University, “since 1980 WIA expenditures (compared to its predecessor programs, CETA and JTPA) have fallen by as much as 90 percent, while our economy has doubled in size and our workforce has grown by nearly half.”

We call upon your leadership and commitment to support funding for our adult education and workforce system and to recognize this education imperative as a national priority. We firmly believe that failure to invest in these vital services, and to improve alignment, focus, and access, will ultimately cost us far more than we will save by making unwise budget cuts now.

We recognize the many constraints you face in meeting competing social and educational needs, but we hope you will approach the adult education challenge with unflinching determination to meet our basic human resource development needs. We cannot meet our shared economic goals without strong support for our currently underfunded adult education system.

Thank you very much for your attention.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Gail Frazier".

Copies to: Senators Daniel Inouye, Herb Kohl, Patty Murray, Mary Landrieu, Richard Durbin, Jack Reed, Mark Pryor, Barbara Mikulski, Sherrod Brown, Thad Cochran, Kay Bailey Hutchison, Mark Kirk, Lamar Alexander, Lindsey Graham, Jerry Moran. Ron Johnson



Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy

1221 Avenue of the Americas - 44<sup>th</sup> Fl New York, NY 10020

Gail Spangenberg  
*President*

October 25, 2011

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Super Committee Co-Chair  
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Jeb Hensarling  
Super Committee Co-Chair  
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Senator Murray and Rep. Hensarling:

I am writing on behalf of the members of the recent National Commission on Adult Literacy, whose report, *Reach Higher, America: Overcoming Crisis in the U.S. Workforce* (2008) addresses our need for a more competitive workforce. All Commission members retain a deep ongoing interest and active involvement in the adult education and workforce development affairs of our nation.

We consider it highly important for the Fiscal 2012 Labor-HHS-Education bills and deficit reduction plans to include meaningful investments in the services and activities that are needed to help America get back to work, and it is equally important to ensure that American workers will be able to acquire the skills and training they need to fill jobs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Thus, we want to urge in the strongest possible way that FY12 appropriation levels for adult education not only be maintained but increased.

*Reach Higher, America* makes it clear that other nations are fast outstripping America in boosting the educational levels of our young and working age adults, which endangers our global competitiveness. This is alarming for a number of reasons important to America's future and well-being, especially because it has long been known, and our report reinforces, that education levels relate to employment levels and income.

Today, two-thirds of the American workforce is already beyond the reach of the schools. Nearly half of the U.S. workforce, about 88 million adults aged 18 to 64, face at least one major educational barrier—no high school diploma, high school graduation but poor basic skills, and/or challenges in their ability to speak, read, or write English—which limits their readiness for needed postsecondary education, job training, and jobs. This includes some 50 million English-speaking adults who have a high school diploma but have never attended college (many have limited skills proficiency), about 18 million adults who speak English but lack a high school diploma, and another 18 million who have limited English language skills (many also with low literacy levels).

Yet our current federal adult education system reaches only about 3 million adults annually and only one in four adults with less than a high school education participates in any kind of further education or training. We should also be stunned by these facts from the Commission's report: 1 in 3 young adults drop out of high school and, of the 30 nations in the OECD free market, the U.S. is the only nation where young adults are less educated than the previous generation.

If America fails to educate new workers from these adult ranks, large numbers of them will become a drain on the economy rather than a positive economic force. And it does not have to be that way. For these reasons, we are disappointed that the Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations subcommittees propose only to freeze Adult Education at the FY2011 level.

It is absolutely essential to have a robust adult education system if we are to achieve our nation's economic goals. It will be impossible to create a workforce skilled to compete in the global arena if we focus only on secondary schools and postsecondary institutions, and neglect the third leg of our educational system, adult education. The Bureau of Labor Statistics forecasts that about 40 percent of job openings over the next decade will require workers with some postsecondary education. One in four working families in our country is low income, and postsecondary education or training can be a ticket out for low-wage workers seeking better jobs. As *The Wall Street Journal* recently noted, employers are now paying college-educated workers 75 percent more than those with only a high school diploma. Moreover, there is a skills shortage in many sectors and regions. Waiting for new graduates is not an option, because these are jobs that must be filled today.

Properly funding the adult education system would yield fiscal and social benefits valued at many times the amount invested because better-educated and more literate adults earn far more than their less educated counterparts. Having a better-educated workforce would add hundreds of billions of dollars annually in GDP growth, personal incomes, increased tax receipts, and savings on incarceration and health care. For example:

- **\$848 billion**—increase in personal income in the US if all adults aged 25 to 64 had at least an associate degree.
- **\$191 billion**—increase in personal income in the US if all adults had a high school diploma or equivalent
- Up to **\$1.4 billion** per year in savings in reduced costs from crime if the high school completion rate increased by just 1 percent for all men aged 20 to 60.
- **\$900,000**—how much more an adult holding a bachelor's degree would contribute to the tax coffers of federal, state, and local governments, versus someone without a high school diploma.



Unfortunately, support for our workforce system has declined dramatically over time, both in an absolute sense (adjusted for inflation) and especially relative to the size of our economy and workforce. According to Professor Harry Holzer of Georgetown University, “since 1980 WIA expenditures (compared to its predecessor programs, CETA and JTPA) have fallen by as much as 90 percent, while our economy has doubled in size and our workforce has grown by nearly half.”

We call upon your leadership and commitment to support funding for our adult education and workforce system and to recognize this education imperative as a national priority. We firmly believe that failure to invest in these vital services, and to improve alignment, focus, and access, will ultimately cost us far more than we will save by making unwise budget cuts now.

We recognize the many constraints you face in meeting competing social and educational needs, but we hope you will approach the adult education challenge with unflinching determination to meet our basic human resource development needs. We cannot meet our shared economic goals without strong support for our currently underfunded adult education system.

Thank you very much for your attention.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gail Frazier". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Copies to: Senators Jon Kyl, John Kerry, Pat Toomey, Max Baucus, Rob Portman  
Representatives Chris Van Hollen, Xavier Becerra, Dave Camp,  
James Clyburn, Fred Upton



## **MEMBERS OF NATIONAL COMMISSION ON ADULT LITERACY**

**David Perdue**, former Chairman & CEO, Dollar General Corporation; former chair, National Commission on Adult Literacy; 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; current CEO of Nonni's Foods, Inc.

**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**, Former Director, National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, Graduate School of Education, Harvard University; International Consultant

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

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

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

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

**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**, Chair, Georgia Workforce Investment Board; 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