

Southern Regional Education Board  
President Emeritus

May 1, 2013

The Honorable Johnny Isakson  
U.S. Senate  
1312 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Isakson:

Considering the great importance of reforming and enacting the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) this year, I want to offer a few thoughts and hopes about that bill and the importance of your continuing leadership. I write you about WIA and the Adult Education and Economic Growth Act (AEEGA) as a still-active member of the National Commission on Adult Literacy, former chair of the Georgia Workforce Investment Board (appointed by Governor Perdue), and president emeritus of the Southern Regional Education Board. Debra Lyons and I had occasion to call on you and your staff when Debra was the director of the Workforce Investment Board.

I am very pleased to learn that you and Senator Murray are having ongoing discussions to advance a new WIA bill this year. And I thank you for your strong bipartisan approach and ongoing commitment to the Senate WIA effort. As you know, reauthorization is long overdue and strong WIA legislation is vital to the improvement of adult education and workforce development programs across the country.

I understand that the new version of WIA you hope to advance is likely to use the Senate draft of 2011 as its starting point. That is encouraging because that draft had substantial input and support from major leadership organizations, and it incorporated many of the recommendations of the Adult Education and Economic Growth Act (AEEGA), the core recommendation of the National Commission on Adult Literacy's *Reach Higher, America* report (see Executive Summary attached).

As you know, significant reforms were contained in the 2011 Senate WIA draft, for both Title I, which authorizes workforce programs, and Title II, which authorizes Adult Education programs. But because Title II often does not command the attention it should in deliberations about WIA, I hope you will give careful attention to it and to the AEEGA as your effort goes forward. Adult Education is a key part of the service-providing network, especially for low-skilled adults and how well it is supported through legislative provisions and funding will have a direct impact on job preparation, employment, retention, and promotion.

The AEEGA was introduced in the last Congress by Senator Webb (S2117) and I anticipate that it will be reintroduced in this Congress by Senator Reed. The AEEGA addresses the changing needs for Adult Education in our 21<sup>st</sup> century economy. Some AEEGA provisions are incorporated in the 2011 Senate WIA draft. However, we believe that our common goals would be better achieved if many more could be. My colleagues and I have worked tirelessly in the past few years to develop support for the AEEGA and I am proud and pleased that it enjoys wide bipartisan support by adult education, ESL, and workforce skills development professionals and

organizations throughout the country. Frankly it is as close to being, or should be, noncontroversial as anything can be in this day and time.

The nation needs a strong stable workforce system. With full attention to the role of Adult Education, the reforms needed to make it responsive to 21<sup>st</sup> century needs, and coordination between Titles I and II, the Senate's version of WIA could move things in the right direction. My colleagues and I deeply appreciate your leadership and in fact count on it as WIA deliberations proceed. We also urge Senate leaders on both sides of the aisle to consider incorporating more provisions from the AEEGA as a part of the reauthorization process. I should point out that the AEEGA provides for structural changes in adult education that have little or no cost associated with them and that recognize variations in need from state to state.

We look forward to working with you and other Senate leaders as this year's WIA effort unfolds. To that end, as a fellow Georgian, I would be pleased to arrange for you to visit an exemplary program in Georgia at your convenience, if you would like, to give you a real-time look at the kind of adult education and workforce skills development WIA makes possible for potential and incumbent workers in our state.

Again, my thanks and appreciation for your understanding and support for WIA...and for your leadership in difficult times in your former life when you chaired the State Board of Education...and for your leadership on education issues in the Georgia legislature when at the Southern Regional Education Board we had occasions to work together.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Musick', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mark Musick

Attachment: *Reach Higher, America* "Executive Summary"

cc: Senators Murray and Reed