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NEW INNOVATIONS AND BEST PRACTICES UNDER THE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT

Tuesday, May 5, 2009

**U.S. House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Higher Education,
Lifelong Learning, and Competitiveness,
Committee on Education and Labor
Washington, DC**

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 10:12 a.m., in room 2175, Rayburn, Hon. Ruben Hinojosa [chairman of the subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Hinojosa, Bishop, Tonko, Titus, Andrews, Tierney, Wu, Davis, Fudge, Polis, Pierluisi, Guthrie, McKeon, Castle, Ehlers, Biggert, and Roe.

Staff Present: Tylease Alli, Hearing Clerk; Alice Cain, Senior Education Policy Advisor (K-12); Fran-Victoria Cox, Staff Attorney; Adrienne Dunbar, Education Policy Advisor; David Hartzler, Systems Administrator; Jessica Kahanek, Press Assistant; Mike Kruger, Online Outreach Specialist; Ricardo Martinez, Policy Advisor, Subcommittee on Higher Education, Lifelong Learning, and Competitiveness; Alex Nock, Deputy Staff Director; Joe Novotny, Chief Clerk; Melissa Salmanowitz, Press Secretary; Margaret Young, Staff Assistant, Education; Stephanie Arras, Minority Legislative Assistant; Robert Borden, Minority General Counsel; Cameron Coursen, Minority Assistant Communications Director; Chad Miller, Minority Professional Staff; Susan Ross, Minority Director of Education and Human Services Policy; Linda Stevens, Minority Chief Clerk/Assistant to the General Counsel; and Sally Stroup, Minority Staff Director.

Chairman HINOJOSA. A quorum is present. The hearing of the committee will come to order.

Pursuant to the committee rules, any member may submit an opening statement in writing, which will be made part of the permanent record; And I will recognize myself, followed by the ranking member, Congressman Brett Guthrie, for an opening statement.

Welcome to the Higher Education, Lifelong Learning, and Competitiveness Subcommittee's fourth congressional hearing in preparation for the reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act, better known as WIA. As with our previous hearings, we are going to focus on new innovations and best practices that will improve the workforce development system. Today, we will turn our attention

to the adult education and family literacy programs that are authorized under Title II of the Act.

We are facing the greatest world economic crisis since the Great Depression. We need to retool our economy, and that starts with investing in our people. The President made clear his commitment when he set the goal of returning the United States to number one in the world in producing college graduates. He also issued a challenge to every American to commit to at least 1 year of college or advanced training.

Adult education programs provide us the bridge to achieving the President's goals. Unfortunately, today, this bridge does not have the capacity to do the job. According to the national assessment of adult literacy, an estimated 93 million adults lack sufficient literacy skills to enroll in postsecondary education or training.

Funding for adult education has actually declined. Today, the adult education State grant program is funded at \$554 million, roughly \$20 million less than the funding level for fiscal year 2004. These low levels of funding mean that we are only able to reach an estimated 2 to 4 percent of the population that needs adult education services.

In 2008, 2.3 million adults participated in federally supported education programs. Of this total, roughly 1 million participated in English as a second language programs. Nearly another million enrolled in basic education programs for adults with reading and math levels below the 8th grade, and the rest were enrolled in secondary education programs that lead to a GED.

The adult education programs have also played a critical role in helping adult immigrants learn English and learn about American society and American government. \$68 million of the adult State grant formula is dedicated to integrated English as a second language and civics programs.

There are long wait lists for all of the adult education services. Our challenge for the reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act is to develop innovative models that will significantly expand our capacity to deliver adult education. We need to fully develop the talents of our entire population. We cannot afford to write off the other 93 million adults. Therefore, we need a targeted, we need a focused strategy to build a bridge to postsecondary education advanced training and a better quality of life for adults.

This is where you panelists come in. We want to hear from you, your recommendations and how we can make this a reauthorization act that is going to take us the next 6 years and get over this economic crisis and put more people to work.

Today's panel brings together experts in the field of adult education, including the most important experts of all, adult learners who have been able to achieve their goals through adult education programs. I would like to thank you witnesses for joining us today. I am looking forward to your testimony.

And now I yield to the ranking member, my friend Congressman Brett Guthrie of Kentucky, for his opening statement.

[The statement of Mr. Hinojosa follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Hon. Rubén Hinojosa, Chairman, Subcommittee on
Higher Education, Lifelong Learning, and Competitiveness**

Good Morning. Welcome to the Higher Education, Lifelong Learning, and Competitiveness Subcommittee's fourth hearing in preparation for the reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act. As with our previous hearings, we are going to focus on new innovations and best practices that will improve the workforce development system. Today, we will turn our attention to the adult education and family literacy programs that are authorized under Title II of the Act.

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Adult education programs provide us the bridge to achieving the President's goals. Unfortunately, today, this bridge does not have the capacity to do the job. According to the National Assessment of Adult Literacy, an estimated 93 million adults lack sufficient literacy skills to enroll in postsecondary education or training.

Funding for adult education has actually declined. Today, the adult education state grant program is funded at \$554 million, roughly \$20 million less than funding level for fiscal year 2004. These low levels of funding mean that we are only able to reach an estimated 2 to 4 percent of the population that needs adult education services.

In 2008, 2.3 million adults participated in federally supported adult education programs. Of this total, roughly 1 million participated in English as a second language programs; nearly another million enrolled in basic education programs for adults with reading and math levels below the eighth grade; and the rest were enrolled in secondary education programs that lead to a GED. The adult education programs have also played a critical role in helping adult immigrants learn English and learn about American society and government. \$68 million of the adult state grant formula is dedicated to integrated English as a second language and civics programs. There are long wait lists for all of the adult education services.

Our challenge for the reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act is to develop innovative models that will significantly expand our capacity to deliver adult education. We need to fully develop the talents of our entire population. We cannot afford to write off 93 million adults. Therefore, we need a targeted and focused strategy to build a bridge to postsecondary education, advanced training and a better quality of life for adults.

Today's panel brings together experts in the field of adult education—including the most important experts of all—adult learners who have been able to achieve their goals through adult education programs. I would like to thank you witnesses for joining us today. I am looking forward to your testimony.

I now yield to the Ranking Member, Mr. Brett Guthrie of Kentucky, for his opening statement.

Mr. GUTHRIE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for calling this hearing; and I welcome our distinguished witnesses, a great Kentucky company here with us today, founded right near my district.

Our country continues to face tough economic challenges. We face complex and difficult problems as we work to restore economic growth. Investing in our workforce is important to ensure that workers are adequately prepared to meet the changing demands of our economy. With proper investment, our workforce can be strengthened and maintain its competitive advantage.

When I first began in politics, I was running for the State legislature in Kentucky and in the State Senate, and people talked to me. What are you focused on? K-12? Secondary? Adult? I said, really, it is K-R, kindergarten through retirement. It became my mantra.

And several witnesses here that fit the mold is that some people were not educated at the level they should have been when they were younger and need education to get back in the workforce. Be-

cause it is difficult to work without it. My father went to work for Ford Motor Company, thought he would work there until he retired. They shut the plant down, and he had use his education to become a businessperson to find a job for himself. And there are people who are working within companies that see other opportunities and need to continue to move forward.

Another thing I learned in Kentucky, we had a lot of people that were functionally illiterate and then illiterate completely and worked on those issues because you couldn't even read a menu or a book to their grandchild. And we created programs to get them into the system for higher education.

So it is an important thing that we are doing here, and our economy depends on it. For us to have opportunities for people absolutely depends on what we are doing on this committee, and what you are sharing with us is going to help us do a better job because of your life stories. We have some great life stories. I am familiar with one, just being a fan; and I know what your companies are doing with others.

Today, there are 5,000 federally sponsored adult education centers across the country; and these centers are located in schools, community centers, libraries, public housing, community colleges, and volunteer organizations. In Kentucky, Dollar General is one that we are working with in some counties, because we realized people weren't going to school because they had bad experience in a school. So let us go find them where they are. And Dollar General has been a great, great partner with us in moving forward with that.

And as we work to improve the Adult Education Family Literacy Act of this Workforce Investment Act, we must remain focused on improving the quality of instruction, promoting the use of technologies, encouraging the business community to invest. I look forward to today's testimony and learning more of the best practices and innovative ideas around the country as we work to improve the Workforce Investment Act.

Again, thank you all for coming to Washington today. It is going to be great and informative, and I appreciate the chairman calling this meeting, and I yield back.

[The statement of Mr. Guthrie follows:]

Prepared Statement of Hon. Brett Guthrie, Ranking Minority Member, Subcommittee on Higher Education, Lifelong Learning, and Competitiveness

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for calling this hearing and I welcome our distinguished witnesses.

Our country continues to face tough economic challenges. We face complex and difficult problems as we work to restore economic growth. Investing in our workforce is important to ensure that workers are adequately prepared to meet the changing demands of our economy. With the proper investment, our workforce can be strengthened and maintain its competitive advantage.

Education, including adult education and family literacy programs, will be a critical component of ensuring that individuals have the basic skills needed to move up the economic ladder to better paying jobs or a higher education.

Today, there are some 5,000 federally-sponsored adult education centers across the country. These centers are located in schools, community centers, libraries, public housing, community colleges, and volunteer organizations, both public and private, for-profit and non-profit.

As we work to improve the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act of the Workforce Investment Act, we must remain focused on improving the quality of instruc-

tion, promoting the use of new technologies, and encouraging the business community to co-invest in the skills of the local workforce.

I look forward to today's testimony and learning more of the best practices and innovative ideas from around the country as we work to improve this aspect of the Workforce Investment Act.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman HINOJOSA. Thank you.

Without objection, all members will have 14 days to submit additional materials or additional questions for the hearing record.

Before we start, I want to talk a little bit about the lighting system that we use for our congressional hearing. For those of you who have not testified before this subcommittee, please let me explain that lighting system and the 5-minute rule. Everyone, including Members of Congress, are limited to 5 minutes of presentation or questioning.

The green light is illuminated when you begin to speak. When you see the yellow light, it means you have 1 minute remaining. When you see the red light, it means your time has expired and you need to conclude your testimony.

Please be certain as you testify to turn on and speak into the microphone in front of you.

We will now hear from our first witness, and I wish to recognize Representative Phil Roe of Tennessee to make our first introduction. Congressman.

Mr. ROE. I thank the chairman for yielding.

I would like to take this time to introduce a fellow Tennessean to the committee, Ms. Gretchen Wilson. Ms. Wilson is a multi-platinum recording country music singer and songwriter. Her work has won numerous awards, including Female Vocalist of the Year from both the Country Music Association and the Academy of Country Music and the Grammy Award for the best female country vocal performance. Right before this briefing, members of the Tennessee delegation heard firsthand about Ms. Wilson's passion for promoting and improving adult education.

Until last year, like so many Americans, she hadn't completed her high school education. As she told us, it was important for her to earn her diploma, not only for herself but to show her 8-year-old daughter the importance of education. At the age of 34, she received her GED on May 15, 2008, through the Adult Learning Center of Wilson County in Lebanon, Tennessee. We are not sure they didn't name the county after her, too.

This perseverance helped make her a role model, and I am pleased she chose to come to Washington to share her experiences and insight to create a stronger adult education system. She is very busy. She didn't have time to—did take the time, due to a very busy and hectic schedule, to do this; and we appreciate you spending your valuable time and passion with us today. You are making a difference. Welcome to this committee.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman HINOJOSA. Thank you very much for your introduction.

The next person I wish to introduce is Mr. Marty Finsterbusch. Marty was appointed VALUE's first Executive Director in 2001. VALUE is the only national nonprofit adult literacy organization in

the United States governed and operated by current and former literacy students.

Since 2000, Marty has served on Pennsylvania's Adult Basic and Literacy Education Interagency Coordinating Council, having been appointed by three different governors. During his National Institute for Literacy Fellowship in 2000, Marty studied adult learner involvement in all 50 States. He has also served on the governing boards of several national and State organizations, including SCALE, including Laubach Literacy Action, which became ProLiteracy, and has also served on Pennsylvania's State Coalition for Literacy. Welcome.

The next person will be Mr. David Beré, who is President and Chief Strategy Officer of Dollar General. David joined the company in December, 2006, after serving as a Director since 2002. Beré served from December of 2003 until June 2005 as the Corporate Vice President of Ralcorp Holdings, Incorporated and as the President and CEO of Bakery Chef, Incorporated. From 1996 to 1998, Beré served as President and CEO of McCain Foods, U.S.A., a manufacturer and marketer of frozen foods and a subsidiary of McCain Foods Limited. He spent 17 years at the Quaker Oats Company, where he served as the President of the Breakfast Division and the Golden Grain Division. In 1983, he was appointed White House Fellow by President Ronald Reagan. Beré earned both his bachelor degree and his master's of business administration degree from Indiana University, and we welcome you.

Ms. Kathy Cooper serves as Policy Associate for the Adult Basic Education Office, Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, with an emphasis on external relationships and new initiatives. She provides primary support to the State's governor-appointed Advisory Council and has served as a member of the subcabinet team that implemented welfare reform. She acts as one of the leaders in developing the integrated basic skills and professional technical instructional model known as I-BEST.

Kathy started her career in education as a middle school reading specialist in the State of Idaho. During her tenure, she became department head at her school and eventually the coordinator of secondary reading services for that district.

Mr. Stephen Reder is a university professor and chairman of the Department of Applied Linguistics at Portland State University. Dr. Reder's interests focus on adult education and literacy and language development during adulthood. He was the principal investigator of two recently completed major projects in adult education, the National Lab Site for Adult ESOL and the Longitudinal Study of Adult Learning, which followed a random sample of about 1,000 high school dropouts for nearly 10 years, focusing on the way youths and adults failed or succeed in reconnecting with learning, education, and work. A new project directed by Dr. Reder is applying the findings of this study to design an innovative learning support system called the Learner Web.

Professor Reder is the author of numerous publications about adult literacy, including the forthcoming book, *Dropping Out and Moving on: Life, Literacy and Development Among School Dropouts*, which will be published by Harvard University Press.

Also with us is Ms. Donna Kinerney. She is the Instructional Dean for Adult ESOL and Literacy Programs, the workforce development and continuing education unit for Montgomery College. As Instructional Dean, Dr. Kinerney provides administrative and instructional leadership for grant-funded adult educational programs, including the Adult ESOL and Literacy GED Program and Refugee Training Program, which serve approximately 12,000 learners in need of English language or literacy skills development per year.

Dr. Kinerney serves on the board of the Maryland Association for Adult Community and Continuing Education and was the chairwoman of the adult education interest section for Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages.

Also with us is Roberta Lanterman. Ms. Lanterman has been working in the field of family literacy for over 15 years and currently serves as Director of the Long Beach Family Literacy Program in the Long Beach Unified School District. She also serves as the Southern California training coordinator for the McDonald's Family Mealtime Literacy Nights.

Ms. Lanterman has a bachelor's degree from the University of California at Santa Barbara, a California multiple subject teaching credential, and she is a certified trainer for the National Center for Family Literacy.

I welcome each and every one of you, and I look forward to your testimony.

At this time, we are ready to start with Ms. Wilson.

**STATEMENT OF GRETCHEN WILSON, GRAMMY WINNING
RECORDING ARTIST AND GED GRADUATE**

Ms. WILSON. My name is Gretchen Wilson. I came here today to share my story of what adult education has meant to me and to my family.

I, like many other young children, Americans, lived in a household that was sort of volatile, wasn't the kind of place where I really wanted to be or that my mother wanted me to be, either. And at a young age, 14, my mother helped me to sign out of school, and I moved out on to my own and started to support myself. And I think what happens with a lot of young people is that life just starts, and it takes over, and education gets put on a back burner. You have to start worrying about more adult things, like paying your bills and where your next meal is going to come from. So I think that happens to a lot of young people, as it did with me.

Life kind of got away from me, and I found myself in my 20s uneducated and still not sure if this incredible dream that I was chasing was ever going to come true. I was one of the lucky ones, and the impossible did happen for me. I am incredibly lucky, living a life that most people can only dream of.

I am a single mother of a beautiful child, and I also have a musical career. But I found myself in my early 30s still missing something, still feeling like there was a piece of me that I had not completed. The first time I thought about going back and getting my GED was almost immediately. And I feel like that a lot of people feel that they would like to go back and do something more, but it is not there for them. It is not easy to find. It is not financially feasible.

In fact, if this dream hadn't happened for me, I don't think I would have been able to go back and afford to finish my education. This was something that I didn't have to do, but I did for myself, for my daughter, for my family. I feel that I am a better mother, a better person, a better human and a better American because of this education. And I hope and I am here to help other people's dreams come true, and hopefully we can make other people feel as complete as I do.

Thank you.

Chairman HINOJOSA. Thank you.

[The statement of Ms. Wilson follows:]

Prepared Statement of Gretchen Wilson, Grammy Winning Recording Artist, GED Graduate

Hi. My name is Gretchen Wilson, and I'm here to tell you about how important the adult education program has been to me.

I was one of many teenagers who was forced to leave home and school at a very young age. And for most people, education takes a back seat to work and financial commitment almost immediately. I know this because I was one of those people. I struggled financially until I was almost thirty years old, and the impossible dream came true. I became a mommy * * * and a major recording artist for Sony Records. After having been blessed with a life that most people only dream of, there was still something missing, a piece of me that was incomplete. I chose to continue my education not only for myself, but also for my daughter, Grace. She's in second grade now, and she's getting ready to start doing long division.

I realized that, as she got older, I would have to address important issues with her, including the educational needs that had not been met in my own life. I knew that she would be curious about things that I valued, such as an education, and that she would ask me probing questions like, if school is that important, then why didn't you graduate? I also knew that she would need to ask me to help her with much more difficult math problems than long division, and I wanted to be ready to meet the challenge. I wanted to set a good example for her. I was determined to complete my high school education by finding a local adult education program and earning a GED, and I am proud to stand before you today and say that I did. I'm not only blessed, but also relieved that I'll be able to help her with her homework next year.

Going back to school was an eye-opener for me in many ways. After talking with others who had gone back to school, I realized that I was only one person out of many people in need of a GED credential. Not only was I among nearly 6,500¹ adults in Wilson County that lack basic education skills, but also among 577,000 adults in Tennessee and 93 million adults in America with basic skills deficiencies.² Additionally, one in five adults have not completed high school,³ and nearly 7,000 high school students drop out every school day.⁴

Why do young people leave school in your Congressional districts? For many reasons, and the reasons may surprise you. Perhaps a family member was sick, or they had to quit school to work for their family's survival. Some had to travel with their parents who were in the military or who were otherwise mobile because of job requirements. Their education, as a result, was fractured. Credits that counted in one school system would not count in another. They realized they did not have enough credits to graduate, and they felt they had no alternative but to quit. These are only a few examples out of the many diverse reasons why young people leave.

In talking to people, my heart began to ache. There are so many people struggling to make ends meet and they cannot because they do not have high school diplomas. Their parenting skills are lacking. Many do not have the basic education skills themselves nor do they understand that they need to nurture and encourage their children to become well educated. They do not have the social skills needed to navigate the workplace, they feel inferior to their cohorts, and they often just give up. People need the tools to succeed in America, and, at the very minimum, a major tool on the road to success is a high school diploma or GED. All Americans deserve

¹ NAAL State and County Estimates: <http://nces.ed.gov/naal/estimates/StateEstimates.aspx>

² National Assessment of Adult Literacy: <http://nces.ed.gov/naal/>

³ U.S. Census: http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?_lang=en

⁴ Alliance for Excellent Education: <http://www.all4ed.org/files/NCLB-HighSchools.pdf>

a basic education so that they can take advantage of opportunities otherwise not open to them.

Adult education and literacy is a silent epidemic that has been growing for years. It isn't easily recognized like poor health or hunger, although it can alleviate both. For example, nearly half of all American adults—90 million people—have difficulty understanding and using health information.⁵ In order to get good health care and to raise healthy families, adults need to be able to understand the health information available to them. That understanding increases as adult literacy increases.⁶

Educated parents help children succeed and break the cycle of educational deficiencies in families. Adult education and literacy issues are invisible to America because most people who suffer are ashamed of it, try to hide it, and will not speak out. Adult education and literacy is not a priority for our country, but if you have had your eyes opened like I have, then you see that it should be.

The sad truth is, if my dream hadn't come true, I probably wouldn't have been able to afford to take off work in order to get my GED. A lot of Americans out there who really want and need to continue their education can't afford it, either.

Those who do go back to school, in between work and family responsibilities, may be put on waiting lists. In a recent survey,⁷ 80,000 adults (in 41 of 46 states reporting) confirmed students on waiting lists in their state, not counting waiting lists with community-based organizations that do not receive federal funds. There is no excuse to wait list people. What would parents say if they were told their child had to wait three months, six months, a year or more to enroll their child in school? Americans would be in an uproar! Parents would not tolerate it. Why do we tolerate it for adults?

Adults are wait listed for adult education and literacy programs because these programs are severely underfunded. We invest heavily in K-12, Head Start, and Early Head Start but the amount spent on adult education and literacy is significantly less. Invest more in educating the parent, and you'll educate the child and break the cycle of illiteracy for generations to come. The reality is, you wait list people, turn them away, and they're probably not coming back. You've just added more undereducated adults to the statistics. The cycle continues.

Talking to adult educators, every year they are under a cloud of threats for closure or diminished funds. I can only imagine how difficult it would be to work under that type of stress. These highly educated and very dedicated men and women already work on a dime and get more bang for their buck with the dollars spent on their programs than on most federally-funded education programs. I challenge you to show me another program out there anywhere in America that does so much for its people with so little.

Less than an hour ago, I delivered thousands of letters from Tennesseans to Tennessee Congressmen requesting additional funding for adult education. Many of those who wrote are students, sharing their educational goals and aspirations. Here are just a few examples of why adult education is important to them (refers to stack of letters, reads a sentence or two from them):

- I lost my job after nine years because my plant moved to Mexico, and I need to get my GED.
- I'm the son of military parents who were constantly on the move which kept me from receiving many credits, and I'd like to complete my high school education.
- I'm a single dad with two young boys. I come from a bad side of the city where drugs and gangs run the streets. I want to turn my life around through adult education.
- I went from a person who could not read or write to an operation's manager for a major company thanks to this program.
- I came to America to get my education; I would like to open a business here and help my community.
- I had a traumatic head injury and lost my ability to read and write.

These are just a few examples of hundreds of thousands of stories told to Congress yearly about adult education and literacy. Why does Congress seem to pay so little attention to this issue, when year after year it is raised?

Last, I have been amazed at the numbers of lives I have personally touched as a result of achieving my own GED. You have no idea how many people approach me at my concerts to say that I have inspired them to continue their own education. That knowledge inspires me, invigorates me, and compels me to ask you to join me in championing adult education and literacy. Begin now by urgently funding serv-

⁵ Institute of Medicine of the National Academies: <http://www.iom.edu/?id=19723&redirect=0>

⁶ National Assessment of Adult Literacy: <http://nces.ed.gov/naal/>

⁷ National Council of State Directors of Adult Education. 2007-2008 Adult Student Waiting List Survey: www.ncsdae.org

ices to help adults increase their skills and reduce waiting lists. Shape legislation that truly meets the need. Raise this issue on every front. Advocate for it in every hall. Be the pioneer that brings this silent epidemic to light.

Chairman HINOJOSA. I now call Mr. Finsterbusch.

STATEMENT OF MARTIN FINSTERBUSCH, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, VALUE, INC. (VOICE OF ADULT LEARNERS UNITED TO EDUCATE)

Mr. FINSTERBUSCH. Thank you, chairman and committee members, for allowing me to speak today.

My name is Marty Finsterbusch. And, yes, I am a director of a national organization, but I am an adult learner. I went into a literacy program in 1984 as a student. I was in special ed and came out with only a 4th grade reading level. How do you survive with that?

I found the literacy program. It got me up to a level, and I finally got into community college, but it took 10 years to get through community college with all the things that were going on.

But what I really want to talk about and share with you is that it is not just me. A lot of adult learners across the country are coming into programs, getting some help, and they are giving back, and they are getting involved. And we, the students, have gotten together; and we have come up with recommendations that we believe that will help us, our families, our communities, and strengthen the United States. Here are some of these recommendations that I would like to share with you:

One is technology, investment in technology for adult education. For a lot of us, we do have learning disabilities. I cannot spell. Regardless of how long you sit me in a class, I cannot spell. I can comprehend. I can do a lot of stuff. I can plan a lot of things. But I can't spell. With the new technologies out there for the blind and deaf, my workload would double. I could do—if these technologies were introduced into adult education for a lot of people.

Also, another issue that would help a lot of us is case management for adult education. As I was going through the system and wanted to move from ABE literacy programs into community college, there is no direct path for us. How do we maneuver this system? This system has a lot of silos in it. How do we, if we don't know, if we want to go to college, who is telling us about Pell grants? We don't have counselors like in high school saying these are what you are going to face; these are the requirements you need. So we are left trying to figure out the system.

And what would help the whole entire system is case management and introducing that to adult education. That would help us navigate and help us more be successful in getting through this.

The other issue that we came up with is soft skills. Reading and writing and math is critical for our society, but also critical in our society's survival is critical thinking, organizing skills, diversity training. What we are hearing—and this is what business is saying they need about people, but this is what we are saying. And we are asking adult education to look at what labor classifies as soft skills and allow that into adult basic education.

We need these other skills besides. We can't wait until we finally have 3 or 4 years in reading and writing if we have don't learning disabilities or other issues before we can be able to access these other—before somebody teaches these other skills. We need them before we hit higher education or job training.

And so these are just some of the recommendations that we really believe that—let me just—I am getting nervous. I apologize. Slow down. All right.

In summing up this, that adult education has helped millions, and it helped me personally, and I cannot thank them enough. But if we are going to help multimillions of Americans who need help right now, we need to do a couple of things; and that is, one, invest in adult basic education. We need to upgrade it. And that is bringing in the technology and all the other stuff that is out there into adult education.

And then the third is connect adult education to what is going on in our society now, what is all the things that we are facing. Higher education needs to be realistic. It is not here is a book and here is a thing and it has no relationship to our life. Project learning. We can get information as we are doing something for ourselves, our family, and our community.

These are the recommendations that we are asking you to consider; and in closing of this, we would like to thank you for your support for our recommendations. We really do believe, if we work together, we can make the American dream for millions of men and women in this country.

Again, we would like to thank you for giving us this opportunity to say this to you.

Chairman HINOJOSA. Thank you.

[The statement of Mr. Finsterbusch follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Martin C. Finsterbusch, Executive Director of
VALUE, Inc.**

Thank you Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee for this opportunity to speak to you about the need for innovation to improve our nation's adult education and literacy system.

My name is Marty Finsterbusch. I am the Executive Director of VALUE, Voice of Adult Learners United to Educate. VALUE is the only national nonprofit organization in the U.S. governed and operated by current and former adult literacy students. VALUE's mission is to improve our nation's education system and empower adults with low literacy skills to realize their human potential. VALUE asserts that almost all successful for-profit companies systematically use consumer input and feedback to improve their products and services. VALUE helps adult learner leaders, literacy professionals, and policy-makers do this too. In addition to policy advocacy, we help state-level agencies and organizations develop the capacity to train and support adult learner leaders. We also conduct biennial national adult learner leadership institutes and operate a national resource center on adult learner involvement and leadership.

Ninety million adults in our nation have low literacy skills according to the 2004 National Assessment of Adult Literacy. The current adult basic education system is serving fewer than 3 million of them. That means, 87 million aren't being served at all. The vast majority of them don't want to seek help from a system that looks like the schools that failed them in the past—a system that by its design continues to reinforce the stigma of adult low-literacy. Many who do seek help drop out because they can't achieve their own real goals in a timely manner within a system that uses outdated methods. I come to you today to plead for extensive changes to the current adult basic education system authorized under Title II of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). If ever there was a system that cried out for reform and innovation, the current approach to adult literacy in this country is one such system.

But before I make specific recommendations on reform, let me give you a bit more background on who we low-literate adults are and the very real threats we face daily. First, I need you to put out of your mind the unfortunate stereotypical image of the person with low-literacy as being homeless and of low intelligence. For many, adult literacy issues can be traced to undiagnosed learning disabilities, failing schools, and family issues—all having more to do with class, race, gender, and cultural bias than intelligence. As one of our members stated:

“We are your family-members; we are your neighbors; we are your co-workers. We are small-business owners; we are first-responders. We are among the working poor and some of us are even millionaires. Few around us ever know our truth. Because of shame and stigma, we keep it hidden.”

And let me add, we are among the millions of people who worked for decades in the industries of America that no longer exist or whose jobs are being relocated to other countries.

When adults with low literacy skills publicly admit this deficiency, some lose their jobs—jobs for which they received good performance appraisals up until their secret was revealed; they lose the chance at promotion; some lose the respect of their family, friends, and co-workers. As another member stated:

“When we loose jobs, we are unable to transfer to new jobs and new industries, not for lack of desire, but lack of literacy skills. We are people who can’t get into job training programs or off of welfare, not for lack of desire, but because of a lack of literacy skills. We are also people who want to learn English as the language of our new country, but we can’t because of the learning skills we failed to get in our nations of origin.”

Far too few adults with low literacy skills are going to seek help when faced with these very real threats. Especially, they will not seek help from the current system.

My personal experience provides an example of what some low-literate adults experience in our nation’s educational system. As a small child, I suffered from a serious ear infection that caused me to miss-hear certain sounds. In the course of testing, my family discovered that I have a learning disability. I started out going to public school, but had to stay after school almost every day. I wasn’t learning to read, but my teachers would have promoted me anyway because I was a good kid who tried hard. Instead, my parents sent me to a semi-private special education school where there were no grade levels and few challenges. The kids in my neighborhood asked, “Why do you go to that retard school?” I graduated in 1982 with a 4th grade reading level and a poor self-image.

After working for two years, I decided I wanted to go to college. I knew I needed to improve my reading so I went back to my former school. They said they couldn’t help me because I already had my high school diploma. They referred me to a community-based volunteer program. There, I improved my reading 6 grade-levels in 14 months. I began taking courses at the community college. Despite getting A’s and B’s in all of my other courses, I kept failing English composition. Documentation of my learning disability didn’t excuse my inability to spell. I was told I could never graduate until I passed my English courses. With this obstacle on top of job and family responsibilities, it took me 10 years to earn my Associates Degree.

During that time period, I dedicated the rest of my life to adult literacy. I started by organizing a student support group in the program that had helped me so much. I became a part-time staff member there before moving to serve on its Board of Directors. Beginning in 1986, I organized a state student network; conducted workshops and conferences at state and national levels; and served on the boards of several national literacy organizations. I have been appointed to the Pennsylvania State Interagency Coordinating Council under three different Governors. In 1999, I was a National Institute for Literacy Fellow, after which I became the Executive Director of VALUE, the national adult learner organization I helped create.

I talk with adult learners from around the country continually. They share with me their insights, their frustrations, and promising practices. I continually talk with my colleagues from state and national literacy organizations too. I feel I am able to share with you a good sense of what works and what doesn’t work in our system—from the consumer perspective.

VALUE believes it is unacceptable for the current adult basic education system to serve less than 3 million adults each year using 19th Century methods, requiring 3-5 years on average for an adult to achieve “functional literacy.” It is no wonder that perhaps as many as 20% of learners drop out of adult literacy programs before completing ten hours of instruction and less than 3% reach their primary goal of earning their GED in 3-5 years. The system is simply not designed to meet the self-identified and evolving needs of today’s learners and employers in a realistic time-frame—needs that should redefine adult basic education.

VALUE's Social Change Initiative calls for a consumer-driven redesign of the current adult basic education system in this country. It must be redesigned to help many times more learners achieve their personal goals faster using 21st Century approaches. Funding must be dramatically increased to pay for this system modernization and expansion. And finally, adult literacy policy must not be dealt with in isolation; it must be integrated with other federal policies and programs.

The Model T car, silent movies, and vaudeville have long been outdated, yet the approach to adult literacy we use in this country today is still based on assumptions and practices created before the first Model T rolled off the assembly line, and long before the advent of silent movies. We need to modernize this system. Many of the recommendations that follow are based on the promising practices of exceptional providers in the adult education and vocational rehabilitation fields that VALUE asserts should be implemented throughout a modern, innovative system.

First, adult learners should be taught to use modern technology for reading and writing.

The adult basic education system must take advantage of tremendous advances in technology. The current system uses the computer mostly as a tool for drill and practice and largely ignores its potential to speed up the process of meeting learner goals. Technology that reads, writes, and translates exists today for the blind, the deaf, diplomats and international business people. With widespread access to knowledge through technology, adult learners can more rapidly gain the skills and knowledge needed to be productive members of the global workforce.

UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization defines literacy as:

“the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, compute and use printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning to enable an individual to achieve his or her goals, to develop his or her knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in the wider society.”

The focus of the current system in the U.S. is on reading and writing. The focus should be on accessing and processing information independently, as stated in the UNESCO definition of literacy. The Act should require the use of technology, such as what is currently used in the blind and low-vision community to enable adult learners to access and process information independently much sooner than they are able to in the current system.

Using modern technology to help them read and write, adult learners could turn their attention to employment and training information much sooner than if they had to first master reading and writing. It can take three to five years for an adult learner to reach the point of being able to access information by first learning to read. Using technology, an adult learner can learn to access information in three to five months.

VALUE is not asserting that learning to read and write is no longer important. We're simply saying that it doesn't have to hold back adult learners from employment-related information and training when modern technology provides access. Essentially, what we're suggesting is replacing the current adult education and literacy approach with one that looks much more like the vocational rehabilitation model. This would shorten the time required for WIA Title II activities and make it fit better with the Title I timeframe.

Those of us in the field promoting this new approach have coined the term “virtual literacy” to describe it. Virtual literacy merely is attempting to allow for the literacy assistive technologies currently being used successfully in the disability community be used throughout the adult literacy and job training communities. Because of the major technological breakthroughs, the ability to make almost anyone “virtually literate” is currently available, affordable, and gaining wide acceptability in the general public. In fact, Congress recently added a free software download to their website to enable anyone with limited literacy capacity to be able to be “read”—through hearing—all Congressional materials.

Text-to-speech and speech-to-text dictation software is widely available for personal computers. There are even very good software programs available for free. And continually, new and improved handheld devices are being introduced that make virtual literacy an increasingly viable mobile option. With us here today we have representatives from virtual literacy pilot programs at Drake and Michigan State Universities who will be doing a hands-on demonstration this afternoon for Senate HELP Committee staff.

Let me just add that with my learning disability, it is still a tortuous exercise for me to write. Consequently, I dictate messages to my interns. For longer documents like this testimony, I discuss with writers what I want to say and then edit what

they draft for me. I have not yet learned to use the technology that I'm telling you about. However, I am confident that when I do learn to use it, my productivity will increase significantly because I will be able to do the writing myself.

The adoption of this "virtual literacy" approach will require a significant investment, as much or more in professional development as in hardware and software. However, while data does not yet exist to back me up, I think the cost/benefit ratio will be compelling as the significantly reduced time required per student will make it possible for many, many more adult learners to get the help they need.

Second, make case management a core service.

Currently the Act does not require the provision of case management. Due to the complexity of the lives of adult learners, case management should be required as a core activity. Case managers should help adult learners deal with problems in their lives that prevent them from pursuing their education and provide career guidance, making it possible for them to make informed decisions and prepare for future education, a job and/or job training.

Case managers are needed both in adult literacy programs and in One-Stop centers. In OneStops, many adults with low literacy skills find it very difficult, even intimidating, to navigate the one-stop system of job, education, and training services. In some cases, low-literate adults get bumped around from program to program, not knowing how to describe their situation in a way that will help someone determine what services they really need and in what order. Skilled case managers could help them understand what is available and successfully get the services they need and get them in the order they need them. This would not only improve the customer experience, it would also increase the overall efficiency of the system.

The situation is similar in adult literacy programs. Many adult learners have personal difficulties, sometimes related to their low-literacy skills, but sometimes unrelated, which distract or prevent them from focusing on their adult basic education. Literacy-related low self-esteem tends to make a bad situation worse. This is one of the prime reasons adult learners drop out of a program. A case manager could help learners get the help they need so they don't have to drop out.

In some exemplary programs, having a current or former adult learner take on this role enhances the rapport between client and staff.

Adult learners' transition from the literacy program to further education, employment, or job training is another area in which a case manager is essential. Figuring out what your options are, what the requirements are for each option, what next steps to take, and how to prepare yourself for the transition can be a bewildering set of tasks; I know it was for me at one point. In exemplary programs, a case manager makes this process less intimidating and enhances the chances for success. The critical policy point here is that the Act must permit and encourage case management as a core service, not relegate it to an ancillary or administrative function.

Third, adult education instruction should include workplace essential skills.

Currently the Act doesn't address the much needed soft skills including customer/client service; critical thinking/problem solving; cultural sensitivity; leadership; negotiation; personal responsibility; teamwork; and time-management are essential for the success of all workers. Teaching these skills should be a core responsibility of all adult literacy providers.

These skills are needed by those of us who pursue higher education as well as those who take part in job training. The adult literacy program is the place to teach them because many of us work one or more jobs while we are in a literacy program or we get a job without taking part in job training. These skills help us do better in our literacy programs too.

Fourth, measure performance differently.

Learner goal achievement must be the primary measure of success for a redesigned adult basic education system. The current system uses standardized test scores as a primary measure of success and consequently, the program focus is on successful test-taking rather than goal attainment. Adult learners want to focus on their own goals, not on artificial goals generated for local programs by "experts." The use of measures such as standardized test scores are inconsistent with a consumer-driven system.

The current system treats learners not as adults with time-sensitive real-life goals, with job and family responsibilities, with knowledge and experience acquired over a lifetime, and with the burden of shame and stigma associated with low literacy, but it subjects them to a traditional fixed drill-and-practice classroom model more appropriate for working with children. So few seek help and many that do drop out because this approach is completely inappropriate given the complexities of adult lives in the 21st Century.

Adult education instruction should be customized to help individual adult learners meet their self-defined personal goals. One size does not fit all. Learners stay in pro-

grams as long as they see the connection between instruction and their personal goals. Adult education instruction should be based on a “wealth model” rather on a “deficit model.” The wealth model, which is more appropriate for adults, helps learners realize their own strengths and knowledge and use them as a basis for further learning; this builds better self-esteem. Zeroing in and focusing on what adult learners can’t do may be appropriate in child education, but in adults it reinforces already low self-esteem.

Fifth, share leadership with adult learners.

One of VALUE’s core beliefs is that most successful for-profit companies rely on consumer input and feedback to improve their products and services; the adult literacy system should do this too. Adult learners should be part of the planning, delivery, and supervision of adult education services and research at every level. As recipients of adult education services, adult learners have a unique, important, and all-too-often overlooked perspective regarding what does and does not work.

The consumer, the adult learner, isn’t asked for input or feedback about adult literacy policies and programs in any systematic way. Low-literate adults are sometimes viewed as ignorant—at best, people to be pitied and taken care of; at worst, people to be looked down on and dismissed. As one of our members stated:

“When people find out we have low literacy skills, some suddenly start to treat us differently—they talk down to us and show less respect for our opinions, knowledge, and experience than they did before they found out.”

Currently, the Act does not require that adult learners be specifically included in program operation and governance at local, state, and national levels. The system should be much more consumer-driven. The Act should specifically require the integration adult learners into program operation and governance at all levels; our perspective is as important as that of literacy professionals and bureaucrats and must be heard.

During the upcoming intergovernmental conference on adult education to be held later this month in Brazil, UNESCO will consider an International Adult Learners’ Charter. In addition to affirming adult literacy as a human right, this charter states that adult learners have the right to a central role in policy development for adult and lifelong learning systems. UNESCO officials anticipate approval of this charter.

I should add that by and large the community-based program sector of the adult literacy field has been the most willing to embrace an advisory role, and in many programs a governance role for adult learners.

Sixth, change participation requirements.

The adult education system should take into consideration that adult learners have job and family responsibilities that limit their ability to participate in adult literacy activities. The adult education system must be flexible so learners can fit instruction into their busy lives. Because research shows that learners make greater learning gains with increased participation, participation requirements were established for publicly funded programs. While they may be fine for adults without significant job or family responsibilities, they are unrealistic and inappropriate for many others.

Consequently, these participation requirements serve as a barrier to some who seek help and cause others to drop out when they find they just can’t fit the required level of participation into their busy lives. In such cases, dropping out or opting not to participate is a choice they shouldn’t have to make, especially since it is based on research that fails to take into consideration the real-life demands of adults. Additionally, a significant number of community-based adult literacy programs forego public funding because they primarily serve adult learners who can’t meet the participation requirements. The Act should expressly permit the flexibility needed so these programs don’t have to forego public funding in order to serve adult learners with one or more jobs and family responsibilities.

Personal shame and societal stigma of low-literacy also present significant barriers to participation in adult literacy programs. Adult education policy and outreach efforts should be designed to address these barriers.

Lastly, encourage adult basic education and job training activities to be done together.

For many low-literate adults, the amount of time required to master reading and writing skills under WIA Title II doesn’t fit well with the employment and training timeframe under WIA Title I or under TANF, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families. This incompatibility has resulted in far too few opportunities for adults with low literacy skills to participate in job training and literacy instruction at the same time.

Research shows that learners can make gains more rapidly if education and training are done together. In his 1997 book entitled *Functional Context Education: Making Learning Relevant*, Dr. Thomas G. Sticht wrote:

“Functional Context Education is designed to generate swift gains in reading and math skills by teaching academics in the context of learning and performing a given task. For instance, an electrician in training may learn math concepts while she fixes a malfunctioning device. Or a maintenance worker may improve his reading skills while learning to use job-specific manuals, specifications, and forms. Military researchers have found that compared with general literacy instruction, this kind of learning-to-do instruction generates robust and rapid gains in job-related literacy that endure over time.”

By having the adult basic education system adopt a “virtual literacy” approach, the incompatibility between Title I and Title II timeframes can be minimized. As a result, more bridge programs combining adult literacy and job training can be offered, which benefits both adult learners and the system as a whole.

In conclusion, the adult basic education system must not be viewed as a second chance system for people who failed earlier in life. For many like me, it was the inadequacies of the K-12 system that failed us. Rather, a strong adult basic education system must be viewed as an essential part of the prescription for our nation’s economic health and prosperity. Adult literacy is an essential public policy concern; it must not be dealt with in isolation, but rather integrated with other policies and programs. The success of policies and programs dealing with early childhood education, health care, welfare, retraining the American workforce, and maintaining a strong military with capable recruits are all linked to having an adult population with better literacy skills. We cannot continue to waste the potential of the current adult population by devoting so little attention and resource to the adult basic education system. With all federal and state funding combined, less than 4% of adults with low literacy skills are in adult basic education programs and many programs have long waiting lists. And we can not well serve the current adult population by attempting to simply replicate the existing traditional fixed drill-and-practice classroom model.

Thank you for this opportunity to talk with you today. I look forward to working closely with you and your staff in creating a modern and appropriate adult literacy system that is truly designed to meet the 21st century needs of adult learners.

Chairman HINOJOSA. The next presenter is Mr. David Beré.

STATEMENT OF DAVID BERÉ, PRESIDENT AND CHIEF STRATEGY OFFICER, DOLLAR GENERAL CORP.

Mr. BERÉ. Mr. Chairman, respected members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak.

As you mentioned earlier, my name is Dave Beré; and I am the President and Chief Strategy Officer of Dollar General Corporation. I am here today to talk as a businessperson that views this topic as one of the most important issues facing our country.

Chairman HINOJOSA. Would you please turn on your microphone?

Mr. BERÉ. It is on. Does that help?

Chairman HINOJOSA. Much better.

Mr. BERÉ. As a way of background, Dollar General is the largest discount retailer in the United States by number of stores, with more than 8,400 stores in 35 States. We are a 70-year-old company in the Fortune 300, \$10 billion in sales, with more than 72,000 employees.

Adult literacy is important to Dollar General for a number of reasons. Our cofounder, J. L. Turner, was functionally illiterate, with only a third grade education. His family’s recognition of that tremendous burden formed the beginning of the company’s long legacy of support for adult learners.

But, today, we see more than ever the pressures that low literacy skills can put on business success and productivity. Importantly, adult literacy challenges in this country impact our customers and

our employees in particular. We see the hardships they face every day, and we want to help them.

And indeed we are helping. In the last 15 years, Dollar General has donated more than \$33 million to literacy and basic educational efforts that have helped more than 1.6 million adults improve their literacy skills. We underwrote the work of the National Commission on Adult Literacy, which released its findings and recommendations last June in a report entitled, *Reach Higher America: Overcoming Crisis in the U.S. Workforce*.

As members of this subcommittee, I know you are aware the tremendous need to improve the literacy skills of our adult labor pool goes beyond the reach of the public K-12 school systems. We live in the most powerful nation in the world, and yet one-third of our adult population cannot read well enough to succeed in most work environments. And, at the same time, a large majority of the new jobs created over the next 5 years will require a bachelor's degree or some secondary education or training.

Let me put it to what it means to Dollar General. Simply put, if we continue our current track, over time Dollar General and other businesses across America will not have the skilled workers required for growth and competitiveness. Even worse, we will continue to grow economically apart as a nation; and key segments of our population will be left out of the new workforce.

During the 2009 fiscal year, Dollar General will expand our workforce with the creation of more than 4,000 new jobs in our stores and distribution centers as we open at least 450 stores in neighborhoods across the country. Many of these jobs provide a great point of entry into the workforce. However, because of the evolution of the retail industry and the increased use of technology, even those entry level jobs require competent literacy and basic technology skills.

Now, to help increase the skill set of our employees, we have on-site GED classes and ESOL classes at our distribution centers. We offer a GED reimbursement program for full-time employees; and through the partnership of ProLiteracy, we offer a literacy and basic educational referral program for employees and customers that generates more than 6,000 referrals annually.

We recognize the value of incumbent worker training, tax credits, incentives to encourage businesses to hire and invest in professional development and basic skills of lower skilled workers. However, as we all know, the business community cannot tackle all the challenges. We need your partnership and that of the States and nonprofit sector to effectively address this need.

As we address this important issue, we highly recommend that together that we keep adult literacy high on the national agenda. Specifically, we ask the following:

We ask for the committee's consideration of the recommendations presented by the National Commission on Adult Literacy.

Two, we ask that the committee evaluate the funding sources for literacy and ensure there is an open dialogue between funding streams. We need to build strategic collaborations between and among government agencies and between those agencies and the private sector.

Three, we ask the committee to recognize the valuable role and increased support for community based organizations that help adults at the lowest levels of literacy so that they can receive the personal instruction that they need.

Thank you very much for your time and attention.

Chairman HINOJOSA. Thank you.

[The statement of Mr. Beré follows:]

**Prepared Statement of David Beré, President and Chief Strategy Officer,
Dollar General Corp.**

Mr. Chairman and respected members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is David Beré. I am President and Chief Strategy Officer of Dollar General Corporation. Dollar General is the largest discount retailer in the United States by number of stores with more than 8,400 neighborhood stores located in 35 states. We are headquartered in Goodlettsville, Tennessee and employ more than 72,000 workers. As a large employer, we have a vested interest in ensuring that this country has a workforce that is prepared to meet the challenges of doing business in the 21st century.

Dollar General's History with Adult Literacy

Dollar General's history of supporting literacy dates back to 1939. Our co-founder, J.L. Turner, was functionally illiterate. He had to drop out of school in the third grade when his father was killed in an accident. As the oldest child in the family, he never had the opportunity to return to school. However, with hard work and determination he started the Fortune 300 company we recognize today as Dollar General.

Dollar General is committed to supporting literacy, not only because of our founder's legacy, but also because of our commitment to meeting the basic needs of our customers and employees. Since 1994, we have donated more than \$33.4 million to nonprofit literacy efforts. We have helped more than 1.6 million adults receive basic education assistance and provided more than 50,000 literacy referrals to individuals who would like to learn to read, prepare for the GED or learn the English language. Dollar General also underwrote the work of the National Commission on Literacy, which released its findings and recommendations last June in a report titled, *Reach Higher America: Overcoming Crisis in the U.S. Workforce*. This report shows the connection between our country's global competitiveness and the need for a workforce that can read, write, do math, speak English, and use technology.

While we are proud of our investments in literacy and basic education, we recognize that the staggering number of adults in need of basic literacy and education assistance continues to grow. It will take the federal government, state governments and an increased awareness across the nation to initiate the tide of change needed to give back the American Dream to the American people and to those arriving in our country looking for opportunities to improve their lives.

Adult Education in the United States

According to the National Assessment of Adult Literacy, 93 million adults in the United States—or roughly 30 percent of our nation's total population—read at the two lowest levels of literacy.

Unfortunately, we have become a society that is desensitized to numbers and statistics. So, I would like to put this statistic into context. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 93 million exceeds the total population of the following states combined:

- New York;
- Texas;
- Pennsylvania;
- Tennessee;
- Ohio;
- Delaware;
- Indiana; and
- Michigan.ⁱ

ⁱUS Census Bureau, Population Finder

Impact on Business

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 63 percent of the 18.9 million new jobs created during the 2004—2014 period are projected to be filled by those with at least a bachelor's degree.ⁱⁱ

According to the Employment and Training Administration's report on Why America Needs an Educated and Prepared Workforce, 90 percent of the fastest growing jobs in the United States require some level of post-secondary education or training.ⁱⁱⁱ

We live in the most powerful nation in the world, and yet one third of our population cannot read well enough to succeed in most work environments.^{iv}

The National Center on Educational Quality of the Workforce estimates that literacy deficiencies result in an estimated \$60 billion loss in productivity in the United States annually.^v

There are more than 150 million people in the US work force.^{vi} While there is great need for support of K-12 programs, only two percent of the annual workforce will come from the current year's high school graduating class.^{vii} Therefore, there is a great need to invest in the adults that are already in the workforce to maintain our global competitiveness and increase the employability of the current labor pool.

What does this mean to business?

To maintain the United States' ability to compete globally, we must address the issue of adult literacy and basic education in our nation. We can no longer allow this silent epidemic to cripple our productivity and diminish our standing in the world's economy. The inability of so many of our adult citizens to read, write, speak English, and to perform other vital basic work and life tasks at a proficient level threatens the social fabric of our nation as well as the vibrancy of our local and national economies.

What does this mean to Dollar General?

Dollar General employs more than 72,000 people across 35 states at our stores, distribution centers and corporate office. Despite the tough economic times, we are creating more than 4,000 new jobs this year and opening at least 450 stores in communities across the country.

Retail jobs are a great entry point into the workforce for many individuals. Through the retail experience, individuals learn basic business skills, customer service and technology skills that can help them transition into higher paying management positions within retail or transition to other sectors.

While retail is a great point of entry into the workforce, the evolution of the retail industry has necessitated that Dollar General and many other retailers require a higher level of basic skills for entry-level workers. This is true at our neighborhood stores and in our distribution centers.

To meet the educational needs of our workforce, we have on-site GED classes and ESOL classes at our distribution centers. We offer a GED reimbursement program for full-time employees. Through a partnership with ProLiteracy, we offer a literacy and basic education referral program for employees and customers across our 35 state market area. That program, which we are very proud of, generates more than 6,000 referrals annually.

We recognize the value of incumbent worker training and are developing plans to expand and strengthen our training programs for lower skilled workers. We support training programs that are designed to increase productivity and the potential for company growth while increasing an employee's basic education, work skills, earnings potential and potential for upward mobility. Other companies support and provide similar programs. However, for a variety of reasons, businesses alone cannot tackle all the needs of incumbent workers. The cost of training and lost or delayed productivity can present challenges for businesses. Additionally, because individuals have different preferences in terms of where and how they want to receive instruction, it is difficult for a company like Dollar General to meet the needs of all of its workers who want to improve their literacy skills. To meet those critical needs, we need continued support from and partnership with federal and state governments.

ⁱⁱ United States Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Why America Needs an Educated and Prepared Workforce

ⁱⁱⁱ United States Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Why America Needs an Educated and Prepared Workforce

^{iv} US Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, 1992 National Adult Literacy Survey and 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy

^v Policy Brief, The Working Poor Families Project: Strengthening State Policies for America's Working Poor;

^{vi} Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Situation Summary, March 2009

^{vii} Bureau of Labor Statistics, Economic News Release, College Enrollment and Work Activity of High School Graduates, 2008

Therefore, we encourage and ask for your continued support of tax credits and incentives to encourage businesses to hire and invest in the professional development and basic skills of lower skilled workers.

We also need to increase access to programs for employees outside of the work environment. Entering a classroom for an adult learner can be intimidating. For matters of privacy and pride, some employees do not want to take classes on-site or in a setting with their peers. We understand and respect our employees' desire for confidentiality. Therefore, in those circumstances, we make every effort to refer them to a local program to receive the assistance they need. When making outside referrals, we are challenged by access to instruction due to a waiting list or the absence of programs in rural markets for learners at all levels. Therefore, we ask for your continued support in increasing access for learners.

With increased funding for incumbent worker training programs and more parity in funding for community-based and institutional-sponsored programs, we can help resolve some of the challenges noted above.

Dollar General remains steadfast in our commitment to literacy. Our support for adult education will not waiver. Today, we extend our hand in partnership and hope that you will join us in expanding opportunities for adult learners across the nation.

Conclusion

Winston Churchill once said, "It is no use saying, we are doing our best. You have got to succeed in doing what is necessary."

As you address this important issue, we ask that you help ensure that adult literacy is high on the national agenda and that you consider these four specific things.

1. We ask for the Committee's consideration of the recommendations presented by the National Commission on Adult Literacy in its report titled, *Reach Higher America: Overcoming Crisis in the U.S. Workforce*.

2. We ask that the Committee evaluate the funding sources for literacy and ensure that there is open dialogue between funding streams. We need to build strategic collaborations between and among government agencies and between those agencies and the private sector to ensure that we are working toward a common goal and strategically focusing funding efforts.

3. We ask the Committee to continue to support employment tax credits such as the Work Opportunities Tax Credit, the Welfare-to-Work Tax Credit and also incentives for Incumbent Worker Training Programs across the United States.

4. We ask the Committee to recognize the valuable role and increase support for community-based organizations that help adults at the lowest level of literacy receive the personalized instruction they need to increase their employability and advance to traditional Adult Basic Education programs.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony and for your work in this area of critical importance to our country.

Chairman HINOJOSA. At this time, I would like to call on Kathy Cooper.

STATEMENT OF KATHY COOPER, POLICY ASSOCIATE, OFFICE OF ADULT BASIC EDUCATION, WASHINGTON STATE BOARD FOR COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGES

Ms. COOPER. Thank you for the opportunity to talk with you this morning about innovation by adult basic education programs and community and technical colleges in Washington State.

I would like to start by telling you what caused us to innovate. Simply put, we looked at what was happening in our State and compared that with the outcomes of our efforts. Despite good work, we fell short of meeting the accelerating needs of our students and State. We were serving well less than 10 percent of the people that needed our services, with serious implications, because these underprepared and underserved adults are our fastest growing population and will make up all of the growth in our State's workforce.

Second, our students were not succeeding. Joint research by the State Board and the Community College Research Center at Co-

lumbia University found that too few adult learners reach what the study called the tipping point. That is enough education to significantly impact their own self-sufficiency and move students into the talent pipeline.

Finally, our employers couldn't find the workers that they needed.

This combination of factors caused us to look at change.

So what are we doing that is different? Our flagship effort is I-BEST, Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training. I-BEST puts an adult basic education and professional technical instructor in the same classroom at the same time. They offer instruction that integrates job-specific and basic skills for students ready to succeed. That instruction leads to a real certificate recognized by local employers in a demand field with a living wage job. It is the same certificate earned by traditional college students, and it earns college credit. And this instruction prepares students not only for the first step on an education career pathway, but it gives them the skills and knowledge they need to continue. You add to that a full range of student support, and you have I-BEST.

So how then do we know that it is working? One measure of I-BEST's success is the growth of our programs. In 3 years, we have gone from 10 pilots to 138 approved programs at all 34 community and technical colleges in our State.

Another measure is how I-BEST students perform. For example, Tacoma Community College has an I-BEST accounting program that includes adult basic education and traditional students. But there is a difference in the performance of these two groups. One hundred percent of I-BEST students are retained in this program. Their average grade point average is a 3.5, and all of them pass the courses.

We also have independent evidence of our success. The Community College Research Center just released a working paper that documents that I-BEST students on average earn not only 52 credits more than needed to reach the tipping point, but they also increase their basic skills faster than students enrolled in traditional classes. The data confirmed that I-BEST works.

Finally, what can we ask you to do to support these kinds of efforts as you reauthorize WIA Title II?

First, we would ask you to redefine the purpose of Title II as students success in postsecondary programs and progress along career pathways.

Second, we would ask you to reform the data and accountability system to reflect that new purpose and to make sure that the data we report is useful for teaching and learning as well as accountability.

Finally, we would ask you to link a clear purpose for adult basic education and reformed accountability with increased funding. It makes no sense to acknowledge the exponential increases in under-filled populations in our country, as well as the continually increasing levels of skill required for a recovering economy, and then starve the solution for both of those issues. At a specific level, we recommend that new legislation include a \$75 million appropriation for seeding and scaling up approaches like I-BEST.

We are proud of the innovative efforts at community and technical colleges in Washington State. As you reauthorize WIA Title II, you can make it possible for us to expand those efforts and to be joined in innovation by colleagues across our country.

Thank you.

Chairman HINOJOSA. Thank you.

[The statement of Ms. Cooper follows:]

Prepared Statement of Kathy Cooper, Policy Associate, Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, my name is Kathy Cooper, representing the Office of Adult Basic Education for the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges in Olympia, Washington.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the innovative efforts of adult basic education programs at Washington state's community and technical colleges. I'm going to do that by answering four questions:

"Why innovate? Why isn't the way we've always done adult education good enough?"

The short answer is that we looked at what was happening in our state and compared that to the outcomes of our efforts. Despite good work, the data showed that our efforts fell short of meeting the continually accelerating needs of our students and our state. Specifically we learned three important things:

First, we were serving less than 10% of those that needed our services. This had serious implications for our state's future because these under-prepared and under-served adult workers are from our fastest growing populations and will account for all of the net growth in our state's workforce for at least the next two generations.

Second, not enough of our students were succeeding. Joint research by our state board and the Community College Research Center at Columbia University found that too few low-income adult learners in our colleges ever reach what the study called the "Tipping Point," that is, enough education to make a significant difference in economic self-sufficiency and to enter into the talent pipeline needed by our state's employers to compete.

Third, our employers, in the midst of the last recession and at the height of our economic boom, couldn't find enough qualified workers. In fact, the number of Washington employers who identify lack of basic and English language skills among workers as a barrier to their success tripled in two years.

This combination of changing demographics, accelerating skill requirements, students' goals, and our determination to help every student move forward further and faster toward the Tipping Point is what spurred us to innovate.

What are we doing that's different?"

The flagship effort among our innovative practices is I-BEST—Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training. (See the I-BEST summary.)

At its core, I-BEST tosses to one side traditional assumptions about educational scope, sequence, and readiness to learn. I-BEST puts an adult basic education and a professional-technical instructor in the same classroom at the same time. They offer instruction that integrates jobspecific and basic skills for any student that is ready to succeed, whether or not they have a GED or high school diploma. That instruction leads to a real certificate recognized by local employers in a demand field that pays a living wage. It's the same certificate earned by traditional college students and it carries college credit. And that instruction prepares students not only for that first step on their education and career pathways, but it gives them the skills and knowledge they need for the next step. Change your mental image from the picture of a career ladder with rungs spread too far apart for some of us to reach into the image of a chain with links that interlock. That's IBEST.

Beyond integrating basic skills and professional-technical education, I-BEST students also receive a full range of student supports, including advising, counseling, case management and financial aid. This blend of enhanced student services with innovative instruction is also I-BEST.

"How do we know it's working?"

This question has the same answer as the first question: We listen to what our data are telling us.

One measure of I-BEST success is the growth of the program. I-BEST has expanded from pilots at 10 colleges to 138 approved programs at all 34 community and technical colleges in our state. (See the Program Inventory)

Another measure of success is how much better I-BEST students perform. For example, Tacoma Community College has an I-BEST accounting program that includes adult basic education and ESL students along with the adults you would expect to see in a community college classroom. But there is a difference in the performance of these two student groups. 100% of I-BEST students are retained in the program. Their average GPA is a 3.5. Finally, all of the I-BEST students pass the courses. In short, their outcomes outpace traditional students.

We have independent evidence of I-BEST success as well. Columbia University's Community College Research Center just released a working paper at the end of April that documents IBEST's positive outcomes. The paper notes that I-BEST students, on average, not only earn 52 credits—more credits than needed to reach the Tipping Point, but they also increase their basic skills more than students enrolled in traditional ABE classes. With the same hours of instruction, 62% of I-BEST students make significant gains compared to 45% of traditional ABE students.

The data just confirms what our students tell us all the time: I-BEST works.

What can Congress do to support these kinds of efforts, especially as you consider reauthorization of WIA, Title II?

From the perspective of Washington state we need three changes in order for us to continue to innovate and bring to scale successful practices.

Redefine the purpose of Title II as student success in post-secondary education and progress along career pathways. 86% of the students who come to adult basic education in Washington state come to get and keep a good job. And we know that they must progress at least as far as the Tipping Point to achieve that dream. Surely the focus of our national system should reach as far as the vision of our students.

Reform the data and accountability system to reflect the new purpose and make the data useful for teaching and learning, as well as accountability. We embrace accountability that is objective, measurable, and evidence-based and we want it to be useful. The data must tell us if students are making progress toward the skills and credentials that have meaning in the labor market and their own lives. And it must tell us which program activities are most effective. And we need it in real time so that we are able to improve outcomes.

Link a clear purpose for adult basic education and a reformed accountability system with an increase in funding so that adult basic education programs can expand services to the growing numbers of adults that needs them. It makes no sense to acknowledge exponential increases in under-skilled population groups as well as continuously increasing levels of skills required by a recovering economy and then starve the solution to them both.

On a specific level, we recommend that new legislation target \$75 million in new Title II state grant appropriations for seeding and scaling up approaches that integrate basic skills and postsecondary education and training or which dually or concurrently enroll students in basic skills and post-secondary education and training.

We also recommend that the Secretary of Education conduct an evaluation of the impact of integrated programs on the rate at which students attain career and post-secondary success.

We are proud of the innovative efforts of adult basic education providers at community and technical colleges in Washington state. As you reauthorize WIA Title II, you have the opportunity to create a fresh vision and new opportunities that will make it possible for us to expand those efforts and be joined in innovation by our colleagues across the nation.

Thank you for your time this morning. We believe that better skills lead to better jobs, leading to better lives. And that is still the American dream.

I am happy to take your questions.

Chairman HINOJOSA. Now I would like to call on Stephen Reder.

STATEMENT OF STEPHEN REDER, PH.D., UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR AND CHAIR, DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS, PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY

Mr. REDER. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman and subcommittee members, I am Steve Reder, University Professor and Chair of the Department of Applied Linguistics at Portland State University and a board member of ProLiteracy. Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak this morning.

Like you, I am moved by Gretchen's and Marty's compelling stories.

With my colleagues, I have been conducting the Longitudinal Study of—

Chairman HINOJOSA. Would you please turn on your microphone? Move it closer to you.

Mr. REDER. Thank you.

With my colleagues, I have been conducting the Longitudinal Study of Adult Learning in which we have followed a random sample of about 1,000 high school dropouts for nearly 10 years. Even though I am formally representing only myself in this hearing, I am humbled by the opportunity to speak for the thousand adults whose stories we have been listening to and learning from and the millions more just like them across the country.

America likes to celebrate people such as Gretchen and Marty who have beat the odds. What I have learned is that, through adult education, we can do something even better. We can change the odds.

The population we followed includes adults who have attended literacy programs and ones who haven't. Careful comparison of their experiences over a long period of time reveals the impact of programs on literacy development, continuing education, and family wage employment.

The bottom line is that programs make a difference. So I urge Congress to reauthorize WIA Title II programs to contribute to our economic recovery. The research shows that many adults work independently to improve their basic skills or prepare for the GED, including many who never attend a basic skills program. This, along with the long waiting lists found at many programs, tells us that there is much more demand for services than the system can supply. So I urge Congress to expand Title II programs to meet the needs.

If we really do want to change the odds, this increased funding should not be used only to do more of exactly the same things. We need to increase the capacity and effectiveness of the adult education system, especially for those most in need.

Here are four priorities my research suggests we pursue:

One, build persistence in adult learners. The road to many adult learners' goals is long, requiring great motivation and persistence of learning. Programs need to engage students for much longer periods, especially those coming in at the lowest skill levels. As the poet William Butler Yates put it, education is not filling a bucket but lighting a fire. We need an adult literacy system that not only lights the fire but keeps it burning.

Two, improve the National Reporting System, or the NRS. Although I strongly support program accountability, we need to improve the accountability system being used in adult education. The NRS misses important program impacts by focusing on short-term outcomes and narrow measures of literacy development. It uses too short a follow-up period for the literacy measures it employs and thus may not help programs put their best foot forward or support their improvement efforts.

Three, develop learning support systems. To increase persistence, adults need learning support systems that provide portable, per-

sonalized learning plans they can follow. These plans might include periods of time in attending programs or working independently with tutors or receiving support services from community based organizations or volunteer programs. Grants could assist communities to develop local learning support systems, perhaps utilizing technology to facilitate collaboration and information sharing among the various organizations working with the same learners.

Four, utilize technology to increase system capacity. Many adults engage in periods of self-study before or after periods of program participation. Programs could increase their outreach and enrollment and increase their students' persistence by using technology to connect these self-directed learning activities with traditional classes. This would broaden the role of technology from offering distance education to connecting different learning modalities and activities over time.

To pursue these and other priorities, the adult literacy field needs an independent, comprehensive research and development center. Although the Department of Education established R&D centers for adult literacy that operated successfully for 15 years, funding for such a center has been discontinued. On behalf of the many adults who would benefit from a higher capacity and more effective system, I ask Congress to establish an independent center to support an adult literacy system that will light the fire and change the odds for millions of Americans.

Thank you.

Chairman HINOJOSA. Thank you.

[The statement of Mr. Reder follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Dr. Stephen Reder, University Professor and Chair,
Department of Applied Linguistics, Portland State University**

Mr. Chairman and Subcommittee members, I am Dr. Stephen Reder, University Professor and Chair of the Department of Applied Linguistics at Portland State University. The Department is involved in teaching, research and service activities related to language and literacy issues in education, work and community settings. My research is focused on adult education and literacy and language development in adults. I was the Principal Investigator of two recently completed major projects in adult education: the National Labsite for Adult ESOL, a classroom-based video laboratory for studying second language teaching and learning, and the Longitudinal Study of Adult Learning, in which I followed a random sample of about 1,000 high school dropouts for nearly ten years, to study how youths and adults fail or succeed in reconnecting with learning, education and work. I am a member of the Board of Directors of ProLiteracy Worldwide and have served on numerous state and national advisory boards concerned with adult education.

I am here to speak with you today about the need for independent research that would help millions of adults develop the skills they need to be successful in today's information and technology age. You have heard about the scope of the adult literacy issue in this country—nearly one-half the adult population of the United States stands to improve their financial health, their physical health, and the well-being of their families by improving their reading, writing, math, computer technology, and English skills. Yet we spend relatively little on research given the size and importance of the adult education mission. Think of the many millions of dollars we would save through better utilization of health care services and the economic prosperity that would be generated from increased levels of employment and a more highly skilled workforce—and research suggests that all of these outcomes will result from appropriate investments in adult education. My own research illustrates, for example, how adults whose literacy skills improve over time experience increasing levels of employment and earnings, whereas those whose skills decrease experience reduced levels of employment and earnings.

The issues to research

Research has a vital role to play in helping shape and deliver adult education more effectively. My longitudinal study of about 1,000 adults who had dropped out of high school brought to light many issues that affect their participation in adult education and identified obstacles to their successful learning. I found, for example, that many adults work independently to improve their basic skills or prepare for the GED. This includes many adults who never attend a basic skills program. This, along with the long waiting lists that potential students find at many programs, tells us that there is much more demand for services than the system can supply.

The research further shows that many adults engage in periods of “self study” between periods of program participation. This suggests that programs could increase their outreach and enrollment and increase their students’ persistence by connecting self-directed learning activities with traditional classes. This indicates an important potential role for technology, not only in offering distance education, but in connecting different learning modalities and activities over time.

Studies of only those students in programs teaches us little about effective outreach methods and student retention problems, however. We need more longitudinal research that follows both youth and adults who participate in literacy programs and those who do not. We need to discover how to provide services to adults so they participate in learning with sufficient engagement, intensity and duration to reach their goals. We also need to learn much more about how to help the hardest-to-serve learners—those who are at the lowest literacy levels, those for whom English is a second language and who are illiterate in their native language, and those who have learning disabilities. Many of these individuals will require years of instruction in order to reach their learning and employment goals. We must be able to help them stay the course as they cope with learning setbacks as well as successes, family concerns, and work issues. Building the persistence of learning in adults facing such long trajectories must be a research priority. We need to learn how to build locally connected and integrated delivery systems that allow community-based programs to feed low-level learners into higher-level institutionally-based ESL and adult education programs. And how to help adult education students transition successfully into post-secondary education and training programs. At the same time, we need much more information about how to reconnect dropouts with both education and family-supporting work.

Most literacy and adult basic education programs retain learners for relatively short periods of time. Therefore, we need to develop new types of learning support systems that provide persistent structures for adults to follow. These structures might combine periods in which adults attend programs, use online materials to work independently or with tutors, or receive support services from local community-based organizations (CBOs) and volunteer programs, for example. Grants could encourage and assist local communities to develop cross-sector, long-term adult learning support systems, perhaps utilizing technology to provide learners and a range of providers and agencies working with them shareable information that can be used to foster more learner-centered integration of services.

We need research to improve the National Reporting System (NRS), the accountability system used in adult education. I support program accountability; however, my own research indicates that important program impacts are missed by a system that focuses on short-term outcomes and narrow measures of literacy and skills development. When we compared program participants and non-participants over time, the evidence of program impact on learner outcomes depended on the literacy measure used and the time period involved. According to these findings, the NRS uses too short a follow-up time period for the literacy measures it uses; therefore, the NRS may not help programs put their best foot forward. Perhaps even more problematic, the NRS may not be as useful as it could be for program improvement. A review of the NRS could determine whether changing either the type of literacy measure or lengthening the time period would better support programmatic improvement efforts. Other issues could be examined as well, such as making sure that the accountability system gives due credit to programs for assisting the lowest-level and hardest-to-serve students. In supporting adults and the programs that serve them, we must keep in mind the words of William Butler Yeats: “Education is not filling a bucket, but lighting a fire.”

To assure translation of research into improved educational practice, increased support is needed for adult education teacher training and professional development. Federal funding once available for State Literacy Resource Centers, for example, is no longer available and the resources for professional development are highly uneven across states. Research can help us determine the role that technology should play in providing such teacher training and professional development in a cost-effective manner.

Increasing the capacity of the adult education delivery system

The goal of all this research is to increase both the quantity and quality of programs and services, not just so that programs can serve more adults—although we certainly need to do that—but also so that we increase the persistence of their learning. We want more adults to stay in programs long enough to reach their education, job-training, and family-supporting employment goals. Better coordination of WIA Title I and Title II programs can play an important part in this as long as we do not lose the basic educational focus of the Title II programs. The stimulus legislation that allows Title I WIBs to fund Title II adult literacy providers is an excellent step in this direction, one which I hope the Committee will include in the reauthorization. The knowledge gained through research can help us develop programs that offer a continuum of services across skill levels and life contexts, and engage the full range of resources and capacities in learners' communities, including full-time and part-time teachers and volunteers, whether working in institutionally-based programs or CBOs. Research can also help us assess the extent to which adult learners are availing themselves of such links to the job training available in their communities. Such service continuum is vital to addressing the complex issues of adult literacy.

Increasing our research capacity

In addition to pursuing a systematic research agenda through targeted grant competitions, the adult literacy field needs a comprehensive research and development center focused specifically on adult literacy and learning. Legislation establishing the Institute of Educational Sciences (IES) requires the Department of Education to operate one or more Centers that address adult literacy issues. Although the Department of Education established R&D centers for adult literacy that operated successfully for 15 years, first at the University of Pennsylvania and then in a collaborative of universities led by Harvard University, funding for such a Center has recently been discontinued. If the leadership at IES is not interested in recompeting a center for adult literacy and education, it is important for other legislation to establish one.

Such a center could be competed and placed at any university or network of universities. It should work closely with literacy and adult education providers and focus on conducting basic and applied research, distilling practitioner knowledge, and disseminating results so that practitioners can understand, respond to, and translate research into practical programs.

Wherever such a Center is established, it is essential that it conduct research about how programs can best support the learning of diverse adult learners to help them meet their long-term educational and employment goals. It is critical that the Center be managed in a way that keeps it free from political interference and pressures unrelated to the needs of the adult education system. It needs the independence, with guidance from a suitable advisory board and peer-review processes, to construct and pursue a long-term research agenda using an appropriate mix of exploratory and confirmatory research methods.

Summary

While there are occasional notable research projects, by and large, the United States invests little money in research and development that would help us increase capacity and improve the quality and effectiveness of our adult education system. Considering the importance of these services to success in higher education, lifelong learning and economic competitiveness, Congress must commit to supporting systematic research designed to identify effective ways to increase program capacity and effectiveness. I recommend:

- Immediately reauthorize WIA Title II to contribute to our economic recovery, with a central focus on adults who are not functionally literate
- Recompete and fund an independent research center for adult literacy and education
 - Focus research on building student persistence, reconnecting dropouts, helping the hardest-to-reach learners, and supporting successful transitions of adult education students into family-wage employment and postsecondary education and training
 - Develop learning support systems that provide persistent structures for adults to follow over relatively long periods of time
 - Explore uses of technology to increase delivery system capacity through online and blended instructional programs and to coordinate employment, education and social services
 - Review and modify the National Reporting System for better accountability and program improvement

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you. I offer my services to the Committee as it continues its work in adult literacy.

Chairman HINOJOSA. Now I would like to call on Dr. Donna Kinerney.

STATEMENT OF DONNA KINERNEY, PH.D., INSTRUCTIONAL DEAN, ADULT ESOL AND LITERACY PROGRAMS, MONTGOMERY COLLEGE

Ms. KINERNEY. Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to share my thoughts with you today.

My name is Dr. Donna Kinerney, and I am the Instructional Dean for Adult English for Speakers of Other Languages—that is ESOL—and Literacy to GED Programs at Montgomery College in Maryland. As a teacher and program administrator for adult English language programs for many years, I will focus my remarks on my own experiences, research, and insights gathered as a leader in the adult education interest section of our professional organization, the Teachers of English for Speakers of Other Languages.

One of the most challenging aspects of serving adult English language learners is bringing appropriate services to the broad needs of our students.

For example, there is Maria from El Salvador who wants to read to her grandchildren in English, but she is one of the 19 percent of all immigrants who never made it to high school in her country and who struggles with basic English literacy. There is Lan from Vietnam, who wants desperately to become a nurse but is like the 2.4 million immigrants ages 17 to 24 who need more English in order to begin postsecondary education. And there is Tekle from Ethiopia, who works as a parking lot attendant but would give anything to become an engineer again as he was in his country, just like the more than 1.3 million other college-educated immigrants who are unemployed or working in unskilled jobs, many because of their limited English.

Like these students, 5.8 million legal permanent residents in the U.S. need additional English if they are to fully participate in U.S. life. Learning English takes time, an estimated 85 to 150 hours of instruction to advance a single level. Unsurprisingly, 44 percent of participants in federally funded adult ed programs are in ESOL classes. That represents just over a million students, a mere drop in the bucket in terms of need.

In my program at Montgomery College, which is the largest in Maryland, we offer life skills, ESOL, English literacy and civics, and adult basic education-GED. In fiscal year 2008, in these programs, we provided over 10,000 seats to almost 5,00 learners, with 82 percent participating in ESOL or civics instruction. English language learners also represent 57 percent of our ABE-GED students, a traditionally native English speaking population in other regions.

We share in the need for expanded services. We are in a suburb of Washington, D.C., not in a State with an enormous immigrant population like California and Texas; and yet our current wait list for ESOL classes is well over a thousand.

We have partnered with our local one-stop to provide ESOL for a customer service job program that incorporates advising and job search support because most adult ESOL learners have only a limited understanding of employment and training services in the U.S. We have learned much about interagency partnerships, workforce training, vocational assessments, and case management services along the way and have used that knowledge to pilot new conceptualized ESOL and vocational training for building trades and health care career pathways.

There are many promising practices across the U.S., career pathways that provide ways for adults to learn English and receive workforce training, bridge instruction to move ESOL learners to adult basic education GED programs and beyond. Ongoing advising and social service supports, like Mr. Finsterbusch noted, and extensive professional development are all among them.

I would like to then propose three areas of recommendations on ways to improve WIA:

First, authorize the EL/civics funding program and expand the scope of Title II to acknowledge the diverse and specific training needs and employment needs of English language learners. The current Title II funding formula does not take into account the English language learner population, yet ESOL services are a primary function under this statute. Instructions should support adult ESOL learners with career pathways and transitions to postsecondary programs. We must include advising and case management services and social service supports. To maintain an increased accountability, we should create more relevant performance measures supported by improved vocational and academic assessments, as my peers here today have said.

Second, increase State leadership funds under Title II and encourage States to provide training for adult ESOL instructors, administrators, and curriculum designers and support adult ESOL teacher credentialing and certification. Adult education is chronically underfunded, and issues of quality are of constant concern. If we don't want to leave children behind, then we shouldn't leave adults behind either.

Particularly in States that are experiencing increases in immigration, teachers may not have had extensive training or experience. It is a challenge to find qualified and skilled instructors and curriculum developers, particularly for vocational ESOL instruction, even for a program like mine that is in a major metropolitan area.

Third, create a research center dedicated to adult education that specifically includes a focus on English language and literacy acquisition and instruction. Given the piecemeal nature of research on adult English language and literacy learners, we desperately need a comprehensive research center. We lack an in-depth understanding of how to best teach English literacy to students who have limited literacy skills in their native languages. We do not yet have complete information on how to help learners persist or transition to other training, yet we are called on every day to implement programs that do just these things, and we must do so without solid research.

And, for the record, I would also like to add to support the National Coalition for Literacy's request to have a professional adult educator on the State and local workforce investment boards to strengthen the relationship between education and labor.

I appreciate the opportunity here to talk with you today. Thank you.

Chairman HINOJOSA. Thank you.

[The statement of Ms. Kinerney follows:]

Prepared Statement of Donna Kinerney, Ph.D., Instructional Dean, Adult ESOL & Literacy—GED Programs, Montgomery College

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for allowing me to share my thoughts on the reauthorization of Title II of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). My name is Dr. Donna Kinerney and I am the Instructional Dean for Adult English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) & Literacy—GED Programs at Montgomery College in Maryland. As a teacher and program administrator for adult English language programs since 1989, I will focus my remarks on my own experiences, research, and insights gathered as a leader in the adult education interest section of Teachers of English for Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), the global professional association for English language educators. You've heard of these English programs referred to adult English as a Second Language (ESL) or adult English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs.

You have undoubtedly met some of our adult ESOL students in your travels. One of the most challenging and fulfilling aspects of serving adult English language learners is bringing appropriate services to the broad needs of our students. For example there is, Maria from El Salvador, who wants to read to her grandchildren in English, but she's one of the 19% of all immigrants who never made it to high school in her country and who struggles with basic English literacy here in the U.S. (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). There is also Lan from Vietnam, who wants desperately to go to college and become a nurse but is like the 2.4 million immigrants, ages 17 to 24, who need more English in order to begin postsecondary education (McHugh, Gelatt & Fix, 2007). And there is Tekle, from Ethiopia, who works as a parking lot attendant, but would give anything to become an engineer again as he was in his native country, just like the more than 1.3 million other college-educated immigrants who are unemployed or working in unskilled jobs many because of their limited English (Batalova & Fix, 2008).

Like these students, 5.8 million legal permanent residents in the U.S. need additional English if they are to fully participate in U.S. civic life and/or pass the U.S. citizenship test (McHugh, Gelatt & Fix, 2007). Learning English takes time; it takes an estimated 85-150 hours of instruction to advance a single level under the National Reporting System, the framework used by federally funded programs (McHugh, et al., 2007). Unsurprisingly, as indicated by the most recent available data, 44% of participants in federally funded adult education programs are in ESOL classes. That represents just over a million students, a mere drop in the bucket in terms of need (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). It's no surprise that waitlists for adult ESOL have exploded across the country—a 2006 survey by the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials found numerous programs reporting waitlists from a few weeks to more than three years. And in fact, Massachusetts reported a waitlist of over 16,000 for ESOL across the state (Tucker, 2006).

My program at Montgomery College is like many others. We offer life skills ESOL, English Literacy and Civics, and Adult Basic Education-GED and assist with family literacy programming.

In FY 08, we provided over 10,000 seats to almost 5000 learners, with 82% participating in ESOL or Civics instruction. However, English language learners are not only in ESOL programs, as they make up the largest demographic in our program and represent 57% of our ABE-GED students, a traditionally native English speaking population in other geographic regions. We share in the national need for expanded services—we are in a suburb of Washington DC, not in a state with enormous immigrant population like California or Texas, and yet our current waitlist for ESOL classes is well over 1000. As is the trend in some regions, our program was administered for many years by the local public school system, but in 2005, as part of a local effort to better serve the education and workforce training needs of adult learners, our program moved to the community college where we are housed under the College's Workforce Development and Continuing Education Unit. In our new home at Montgomery College, we have partnered with Montgomery Works, our

local one-stop, to provide an ESOL for Customer Service Jobs program that incorporates extensive advising and job search support because most adult ESOL learners have only a limited understanding of employment and training services in the U.S. We have learned much about interagency partnerships, workforce training, vocational assessments, and case management services along the way and have used that knowledge to pilot new contextualized ESOL and vocational training for building trades and healthcare career pathways that will transition our learners into other noncredit vocational training programs at the College. In need of highly qualified teachers, we are currently piloting our TESOL Training Institute, a series of four intensive courses, to help new teachers enter the field and veteran teachers improve their skills. In addition, to further extend our hand to the community, we work closely with the Montgomery Coalition for Adult English Literacy, a nonprofit for community-based ESOL service providers to professional development opportunities and guidance for programs that are outside of the federally funded system. But we could not begin to offer this level of service without the hard work of a group of highly qualified and enormously skilled full-time staff and part-time teachers.

From around the country, I hear of programs too numerous to mention here that are meeting the needs of adult ESOL learners by developing many promising practices. Increasing numbers of programs like those in Oregon and Washington are creating career pathways and models that provide streamlined ways for adults to learn English and receive workforce training. Programs like Yakima Valley Community College are creating bridge instruction to move ESOL learners to adult basic education and GED programs and beyond. Other programs such as AVANCE family literacy programs in Texas and Dorcas Place Family Literacy Center in Rhode Island along with affiliates of the National College Transition Network have learned, as have we, that ongoing advising and social service supports are critical to for learners and their families to succeed at all levels including the transition to postsecondary education and training. Finally, many programs nationwide, including the City College of San Francisco and the College of Lake County in Illinois, find, as do we, that ongoing professional development for teachers and administrators is absolutely critical in order to implement quality programs and develop new curricula.

Given these experiences, I would like to propose three broad areas of recommendations on ways to improve WIA:

1. Authorize the EL/Civics funding program, and expand the scope of Title II to acknowledge the diverse and specific training and employment needs of English language learners.

The current Title II funding formula does not take into account the English language learner population yet ESOL services are a primary function under this statute. Instructional programming should support adult ESOL learners with career pathways and transitions to postsecondary programs. To do this well, we must include in Title II advising and case management services because adult ESOL learners are unfamiliar with education and employment systems in the U.S. and often have social service needs that limit their participation. To maintain and increase our accountability for this expanded version of Title II, we should create more relevant performance measures supported by improved vocational and academic assessments that better monitor the progress of ESOL programs and learners.

2. Increase state leadership funds under Title II and encourage states to provide training for adult ESOL instructors, administrators, and curriculum designers and support adult ESOL teacher credentialing and certification.

Adult education is chronically underfunded and issues of quality are of constant concern. In 2003-2004, only 36% of adult ESOL learners moved up to the next proficiency level (McHugh, Gelatt, & Fix, 2007), and in any year, it is estimated that only 10% of adult ESOL learners transfer to certificate or degree programs (Chisman & Crandall, 2007). If we don't want to leave children behind, then we shouldn't leave adult students behind either. Particularly in states that are experiencing increases in immigration, teachers may not have had extensive training or experience in working with English language learners (Crandall, Ingersoll, & Lopez, 2008; Schaetzl, Peyton, & Burt, 2007). With limited budgets and most classes meeting in the evenings, full-time instructional positions are rare and so are career pathways for adult ESOL teachers. All of this means that is a challenge to find and retain qualified and skilled adult ESOL instructors and curriculum developers, particularly for vocational ESOL instruction, even for a program like mine that is in a major metropolitan area.

3. Create a research center dedicated to adult education that specifically includes a focus on adult English language and literacy acquisition and instruction.

Given the piecemeal nature of existing research on adult English language and literacy learners, we desperately need a comprehensive center that will undertake these efforts if we are to meet learner needs. We lack, for example, an in-depth un-

derstanding of how to best teach English literacy to adult ESOL students who have limited literacy skills in their native languages. We do not yet have complete information on how to help adult ESOL learners persist or transition to other training. And yet, we are called everyday to implement programs that do just these things and we must do so without the benefit of a solid research base.

Thank you again for the invitation to speak today. We in adult ESOL programs hope to participate at every table where adult education and workforce training are being discussed. We look forward to an even brighter future serving our students, Maria, Lan, and Tekle, and the millions of others waiting to learn English.

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Chairman HINOJOSA. At this time, I would like to call on Dr. Roberta Lanterman.

**STATEMENT OF ROBERTA LANTERMAN, PROGRAM DIRECTOR,
LONG BEACH FAMILY LITERACY**

Ms. LANTERMAN. Good morning. My name is Roberta Lanterman, and it is a privilege to be with you here this morning.

I have worked for the cause of literacy for more than 25 years. Currently, I am the Director of the Long Beach Family Literacy Program in Long Beach, California.

I would like to talk to you today about education partnerships that work—between parents and children, between the public sector and the private sector, between programs serving generations of learners.

In my early days as an educator, we made incremental progress, but there were barriers we could not overcome because parents were not literate. They could not help even if they wanted to. It was then that I saw the light. The problem is systemic, and the so-

lution was to reach both generations simultaneously, helping adults while helping our youngest learners side by side.

All too often, we compartmentalize education: early childhood, adolescent, adult ed, workforce training. We take limited aim at our problems by running from issue to issue, program to program, without remaining focused on the systemic issues that are causing our education and workforce problems.

Studies show there is a direct correlation between the education of a parent, the poverty status at the home and the likeliness of the child's success in school. Addressing the needs of the entire family is a powerful community strategy for raising educational levels, improving workforce skills, and breaking the cycle of poverty.

Consider Margarita, one woman who made the decision to join our family literacy program and not only changed her life but also the lives of her three daughters. Her dream was to become a teacher, but obstacles got in the way. She was orphaned. She became pregnant and moved to a country where she didn't know the language and had to sleep in the water heater room instead of a bedroom. Her husband's drinking problem was endangering the children, and she worked two very low-wage jobs.

Through family literacy, she learned English, became involved in her children's education and revived her dream of becoming a teacher. Today I am proud to say that Margarita is a U.S. citizen. She will soon graduate from college and has become a certified preschool teacher for the Long Beach Unified School District.

But the effects of family literacy reach beyond Margarita. Her oldest daughter graduated from college and started her own business. Another one is studying to become a paralegal, and her third is enrolled in the gifted program in the high school.

So let me tell you about Long Beach Family Literacy. We have been in operation since 1992. We serve as a model for other literacy efforts and have been lauded as a national example by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Our program includes four components: adult education, parent education, parent and child time together, and early childhood education. We provide adults and their children with the skills and resources necessary to be successful in their education, financially secure and productive members of their communities. They become lifelong learners, which has never been more important than this global, high-tech economy. Seventy-three percent of our participants are at or below the Federal poverty level, and 61 percent have not gone beyond the 9th grade.

By addressing the needs of parents and children simultaneously, we are outperforming stand-alone programs. We exceed State benchmarks year after year. Our most recent adult outcomes show that parents made gains that are more than double the State reading proficiency benchmarks. Our children who entered kindergarten increased their English language skills at a rate of 2.5 more than the Federal benchmark. Children in our program leave preschool possessing the skills to succeed in kindergarten and beyond, and their parents simultaneously gain the language and literacy skills to support them. Our program also ranks in the 90th percentile for attendance and retention.

We continue to implement new measures that ensure innovation and success. In 1998, we joined forces with the Pacific Gateway Workforce Investment Network to integrate family literacy and welfare-to-work programming. The model is still in place. The partnership with our local Workforce Investment Act employment entity is invaluable in bridging the gaps between education and employment for families in need.

Last year, we were awarded a grant from Toyota to bring our program to Hispanic families, to expand to three elementary school sites. The Toyota program, created by the National Center for Family Literacy, brings parents and children together in classrooms and includes culturally relevant programming.

The need is great in Long Beach. Forty-two percent of the population is low income, and the unemployment rate exceeds 10 percent. The good news is that our entire community is responding to our success. Small businesses support our efforts. They know that educated community members make better employees and consumers. Local McDonald's operators are opening their doors for Family Mealtime Literacy Nights to provide workshops and meals to help families improve their literacy skills.

Family literacy is essential to supplying a 21st century workforce. The Toyota/NCFL model doesn't only just work in Long Beach but in both urban and rural settings. That is why it is crucial for the Workforce Investment Act initiatives to support our family literacy efforts. Parents pass along more than just eye color and other genetic traits to their children. They instill values and attitudes towards learning and education. Stronger literacy skills across multiple generations benefit family, communities, and the national economy. It is simply too urgent to address only one generation at a time, one programmatic element at a time.

So I strongly encourage Congress to continue to support family literacy programs as an important delivery model in the provision of the adult education services.

Thank you.

Chairman HINOJOSA. Thank you very much.

[The statement of Ms. Lanterman follows:]

Prepared Statement of Roberta Lanterman, Family Literacy

Good morning. My name is Roberta Lanterman. It is a privilege to be with you this morning.

I have worked for the cause of literacy for more than 25 years. Currently, I am the director of the Long Beach Family Literacy Program in Long Beach, California and the training coordinator for the McDonald's Family Mealtime Literacy Nights. Previously a kindergarten and preschool teacher, I also have been a certified trainer for the National Center for Family Literacy for more than 10 years. That experience has allowed me to tap into national best practices and research for the benefit of the children and parents I serve.

I would like to talk to you today about education partnerships that work—between parents and their children, between the public sector and private businesses, and between programs serving generations of learners.

In my early days as an educator, we made incremental progress, but there were barriers we could not overcome because parents were not literate. They could not help even if they wanted to. It was then that I saw the light. The problem is systemic, and the solution was to reach both generations simultaneously—helping adults while helping our youngest learners side-by-side.

All too often, we compartmentalize education—early childhood education, adolescent education, adult education, workforce training. We take limited aim at our problems by running from issue to issue, program to program, without remaining

focused on the systemic issues that are causing our education and workforce problems.

We must focus on the interconnectedness of the problem, which will lead us to a real, longlasting solution—educating the entire family. Studies show there is a direct correlation between the education of the parent, the poverty status of the home and the likelihood of the child's success in school. RAND Corporation research, "Are L.A.'s Children Ready for School," conducted in 2004, is one such study.

Addressing the needs of the entire family is a powerful community strategy for raising educational levels, improving workforce skills and breaking the cycle of poverty.

Consider Margarita—one woman who made the decision to participate in our family literacy program, and not only changed her life, but also the lives of her three daughters.

Her dream was to become a teacher. But obstacles got in the way. She was orphaned. She became pregnant and moved to a country where she did not know the language and had to sleep in the water heater room instead of a bedroom. Her husband's drinking problem was endangering the children, and she worked two low-wage jobs.

Through family literacy, she learned English, became involved in her children's education and revived her dream of becoming a teacher. Margarita has become a U.S. citizen, will soon graduate from college at California State University and has become a certified preschool teacher. But the effects of family literacy reach beyond Margarita. One daughter graduated from college and has started her own business. Another is studying to become a paralegal, and a third is enrolled in a gifted program in high school with an emphasis on international business.

In 2007, Education Week issued a report that underscores family literacy's philosophy, "From Cradle to Career: Connecting American Education from Birth to Adulthood." Importantly, more than half of the 13 categories used to predict children's future success dealt with issues surrounding parents and other adults. Another category (preschool enrollment) is directly related to parents' actions and value of education. Family income, parental educational attainment and parental employment were the three leading categories. Successful states had strong results in those categories, which served as a springboard for success in the remaining measures related to children's education.

One of the reasons the home environment is so important is that students spend five times as much time in communities and with their families as they do at school, so educators cannot conquer this challenge alone. Parents must be educated.

Let me tell you a little bit about the Long Beach Family Literacy Program that has been in operation since 1992. It serves as a model for other literacy efforts and has been lauded as a national example by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

My program includes four components: adult education, parent education, parent and child together time, and early childhood education.

We provide adults and their children with the skills and resources necessary to be successful in their education, financially secure and productive members of their communities. They become lifelong learners, which has never been more important in this global, high-tech economy.

Seventy-three percent of our participants are at or below the federal poverty level, and 61 percent have not gone beyond the ninth grade.

By addressing the needs of parents and children simultaneously, we are outperforming stand-alone programs. We exceed state benchmarks year after year in adult education proficiency, preschool vocabulary and preschool alphabet knowledge.

Our most recent adult outcomes show that parents made gains that were more than double the state reading proficiency benchmarks. Our children who entered kindergarten increased their English-language skills at rate of 2.5 times more than the federal benchmark. Children in our program leave preschool possessing the skills to succeed in kindergarten and beyond, and their parents simultaneously gain the language and literacy skills to support them.

Our program ranks in the 90th percentile for attendance and retention because we do not let families fall through the cracks. We know if they come to our program consistently, they will reach their goals. It is that simple, but at the same time, it is that complicated.

For example, Cecilia was coming to the Toyota Family Literacy Program with her young daughter. But, after leaving her abusive husband, she moved into a domestic violence shelter 30 miles away. The shelter staff wanted her to quit the family literacy program and find immediate employment, but Cecilia daughter persevered—knowing the commitment would lead to long-term stability. She and her daughter took a train 30 miles to the program. As a result, she received her high school diploma with honors and is attending Long Beach City College to become an art

teacher instead of being stuck in a low-wage job. Cecilia still comes to our program—taking two buses just to get here. She turned a nightmare into a personal triumph.

Our efforts address the educational needs of children and their parents to create literate home environments and prepare adults to enter the workforce.

We continue to implement new measures that ensure innovation and success. In 1998, we joined forces with the Pacific Gateway Workforce Investment Network to integrate family literacy and welfare-to-work programming. The model is still in place. The partnership with our local Workforce Investment Act employment entity is invaluable in bridging the gaps between education and employment for families in need.

Last year, we were awarded a grant from Toyota to bring our program to Hispanic families and expand our program to three local elementary school campuses. Of nearly 200 national applicants, Long Beach was among the top five in nation. The Toyota program, created by the National Center for Family Literacy, brings parents and children together in classrooms and includes culturally relevant programming.

Core services are provided through funding from First 5 Los Angeles and Toyota. But part of the key to sustainability is that we don't rely on just one or two funding streams. We hold fund-raisers with vendors and apply for grants from community foundations. We also request in-kind services and resources from our award-winning school district and our Workforce Investment Act partner.

The need is great in Long Beach—42 percent of the population is low-income, and the unemployment rate exceeds 10 percent.

The good news is the entire community is responding to the success they see. Small business owners realize that educated community members make better employees and consumers. Local McDonald's operators are opening their doors for Family Mealtime Literacy Nights to provide workshops and meals to help families improve their literacy skills together.

Family literacy is crucial to supplying a 21st century workforce. The Toyota/NCFL model has been successfully implemented in both urban and rural settings—from New York, Chicago and right here in D.C. to Shelby County, Alabama; Wichita, Kansas; and Springdale, Arkansas. The Springdale program was featured in a recent issue of PARADE Magazine.

Results from the Toyota programs already implemented include:

- Significant literacy gains by adults with 54 percent improving literacy scores by at least one level. This has contributed to an improved understanding of basic oral and written instructions in English, reading a note from a teacher, setting up a doctor's appointment, and displaying basic computer literacy skills (word processing and sending e-mail);
- Children in the program exceeded peers in such areas as academic performance (79 percent), motivation to learn (86 percent), attendance (96 percent), classroom behavior (91 percent), and involvement in classroom activities (88 percent);
- 92 percent of parents stating they are better able to help their child with homework; and
- 91 percent of parents stating their child's grades have improved.

The needs of New York City are obviously different from the needs in Springdale, Arkansas, but the flexibility of family literacy programming yields success for all communities.

That's why it is crucial for Workforce Investment Act initiatives to support family literacy efforts.

Parents pass along more than just eye color and other genetic traits to their children. They instill values and attitudes toward learning and education. Stronger literacy skills across multiple generations benefit families, communities, and the national economy. It's simply too urgent to address only one generation at a time, one programmatic element at a time.

I strongly encourage Congress to continue to support family literacy programs as an important delivery model in the provision of adult education services.

Chairman HINOJOSA. Now we are going to move into the heart of this hearing on questions, and I am going to recognize myself for 5 minutes.

The first question would go to Ms. Gretchen Wilson. Do you have suggestions on how awareness of adult literacy resources and programs can be raised in both the rural and the urban communities across our country?

Ms. WILSON. Suggestions on how we can raise awareness. Without funding? I mean, I am a businesswoman myself, and you have to spend money to get any kind of a message out. So other than—I mean, I think we are all doing what we can do on our own levels.

I myself, I am on tour. I have shows that I perform in front of, you know, sometimes a few hundred, sometimes a few thousand people; and I am preparing to educate people on my screens, on tour, to let people know how easy it actually was to find the adult education center.

I didn't have any idea how to do it. I went to the local high school and said, how do I get a diploma? I didn't even know where the building was. It is not a very large town that I am from. So I am not sure if I have any answers on that.

I think what I am here to do and I think what I am willing to do is any suggestions that anybody else has. I think we are all willing to do everything we can, no matter what it is.

Chairman HINOJOSA. Gretchen, thank you. I can assure you we are going to do everything we can to raise the amount in the appropriations so that there will be the resources necessary to raise that level of awareness, and I thank you for making us realize that we have got to have money to be able to do that kind of a marketing program and thus raise the level of awareness. So we thank you for your suggestion.

My next question will go to Martin Finsterbusch. Why do you think adults drop out of literacy programs so frequently before completing their learning goals?

Mr. FINSTERBUSCH. Why they drop out? There is a lot of reasons why people drop out. I will try to explain this the best I can. There is a lot—relax, Marty. I am sorry.

Chairman HINOJOSA. Take your time.

Mr. FINSTERBUSCH. All right. The reason why people come in the program I tried to describe is that there is more reason why people come into a program than there are leaves on a tree. We all have different reasons why we come in. But then again in our society, why we fail out, sometimes it could be the requirements, the sitting in a classroom. You have family obligations. Where is that program? And then when you come into a program, you found your program at that library someone told you. So coming into the system, it all depends on the program you hit.

And then there is that program meeting the needs that you want. For example, if you just lost your spouse who then did your checkbook for you and paid your bills for you and you now have to do with that and you go to a program and say, I need help how to read, well, I will help you how to read, but it will going to take us 2 to 3 years to help you. But I need to learn how to do my checkbook now. If a program can't meet that person's needs, they are going to go.

If another person comes in and said, look, my job just got transferred over to another country. I need to learn how to fill out this application now. And the program says, okay, well, we are going to have you read, teach you how to read but don't address how to fill out that application now, they are going to leave.

So immediate needs have to be addressed by adult education if you don't want us to leave. And that is one I think of the biggest reasons.

Chairman HINOJOSA. Thank you.

My next question I want to direct to David Beré. What are some of the barriers that small- and medium-sized businesses face in helping employees improve their literacy skills?

Mr. BERÉ. I think there are two things we need to think about. You mentioned—

Chairman HINOJOSA. I don't think your speaker is on.

Mr. BERÉ. Sorry. Two things for—I think one of the biggest barriers right now is just awareness, what you mentioned before. As I have gotten into this in the last 18 months to 24 months, I have been stunned by the statistics; and it has been a real concern going forward for our business and other businesses.

I think the other big barrier—so I think awareness, understanding, and then a third thing is funding. Small businesses—you know, we are a large corporation. We have a lot of passion for this. We can afford a lot of the training that we are doing and a lot of the programs that we are doing. But from a small business standpoint, I think it is difficult for them. So any type of tax incentives and things of that nature I think would be very beneficial to them.

Chairman HINOJOSA. I agree with you that resources are necessary; and assuming what I said earlier, that the appropriations will be increased, how can we leverage both the private sector investment in money and timed resources with the Federal investment so that there would be greater success?

Mr. BERÉ. That is a great question, and I don't know if I have the answer to that other than what you just said. I think it is extremely important. We have found in the programs that we have been involved with when there is partnership between the private sector and there is—and the not for profit and the company, you get a lot better success. So the examples that we have had is we have been able to either get the cooperation of a State or funding from a State. You combine that funding from our resources.

And then the other thing that is really important from a best practices standpoint, we have been very clear on the goals that we want, we are trying to accomplish. It is usually around a specific area. It could be region and specific goals against an educational goal. I think it is very important that we are clear on the outcomes that we are trying to get, and I think it is very important that we continue to measure those things.

And then the fourth thing is the partnership. So we have to figure out exactly what you just said.

Chairman HINOJOSA. We will work on that. I think you are very thorough, and I appreciate that.

I would like to call on Congressman Guthrie for his questions.

Mr. GUTHRIE. Thank you very much. My first one will be for Ms. Wilson.

I worked in a manufacturing plant before I came here, and there was a lady who is a little older now, but was 19. She had got married, had a baby and didn't go to college, and she obviously had the talent and opportunity. So we really encouraged her. She kind of rose up through the ranks, and wanted to be a supervisor, so we

wanted her to get some background and sent her to school and tutored her.

And she came to me afterwards. I said, how was it? She said, you know what, it really impressed upon me how much it affected my children. I mean, my children seeing me study made them want to study more.

And there is a lady at Vanderbilt in Nashville that wrote a book, and the quote I will take out of the book is if you want to educate a child, educate its mother. And there is a lot of research that shows that. And so I met your daughter just earlier, and I—just the experience of you, if you could share that, if you wouldn't mind, the sense of you going to school and what it did for her in school.

Ms. WILSON. I really don't think that I had any idea when I made the decision, because I really made the decision to go back and finish my education for me. It was something that was a desire that I had, and it was something that was missing for me. I really didn't actually think about it, you know, how it would affect my daughter until I got involved in it.

You know, she was proud of me, and that, I think, maybe is the first time that I have seen that look in her eye. You know, to have my daughter there at graduation with me was—I know it wasn't the way it was supposed to work, but I wouldn't have changed it for anything now.

I think—like I said earlier, my mother, my mother dropped out. She didn't finish school, and I am almost positive that that is the reason why I found it unimportant to myself.

And I know that I am setting a good example by doing this, and I know that by finishing this and—you know, I am also—I am interested in having a college education. Musical careers don't last forever. So I know now that my education will continue, and I will go on, and hopefully I will continue to be inspiring to her. I don't want her to think that these sort of things that happened for me happen for everybody. They are very few and far between.

So we have to make sure that parents out there are educating their children on, you know, hey, you are not going to be Mr. Basketball U.S.A., you might not be a country music mama over here; you might have to really, really work and have an education. And I think it is important for people like me, and that is why I am here today, to show that to everyone else. This doesn't happen to everyone. It may have not happened for me, and I should have had a backup plan, and I didn't, but now I do.

Mr. GUTHRIE. Well, I think you said when we were talking earlier, too, and I just want to comment that, you know, you are a star, and you are now getting your degree, but it was hard work. You just didn't all of the sudden become a famous person. You worked hard, and people who work hard at it can get there. We need to have the opportunity for people willing to work hard and want to work hard to get there. I think that is what we need to be focused on in this.

Mr. Reder, I am working on something in Kentucky. We have an estimated 20 percent that are functionally illiterate when we were doing some studies. We were looking at trying to bring technology, because just the numbers to have tutors—you should have the

numbers. You couldn't tutor enough people to get the level of education, the level they need and the people in the college.

And so we were doing some experiments with technology and talked with Dollar General on that, as I mentioned earlier. Are you seeing—I know you are using technology to teach teachers. Are you seeing that technology—because my first impression of that was people would be kind of scared of technology if they were functionally illiterate, but we haven't really seen that. They have actually been able to use technology to try to get—we want to find something that is replicable, that we can put it everywhere and people can have access to it, because the one-on-one, just the numbers are too big. Could you comment on what you have done with technology in that respect?

Mr. REDER. Well, technology is one of the areas I was suggesting. I offered great potential for increasing the capacity and effectiveness of our programs. We need to do research and development to actually, you know, develop those technologies to the point where I can really answer your question. That is one of the reasons I am calling for a research center that can look at that question.

Mr. GUTHRIE. We set up a program in Kentucky. It's called—the group that is doing this is CCLD, the Collaborative Center for Literacy Development, at University of Kentucky, and we are trying to see how can we adapt technology just to get to the masses that way. So maybe there is an opportunity to look at that further.

Mr. REDER. I think, you know, using it for distance delivery, you know, letting adults study, you know, with technology on line and so forth, and increasingly the younger adults coming through the system are very comfortable with technology, unlike when I went through the system.

But I think there are other ways technology can be very valuable, too, trying to create sort of an anywhere, anytime learning plan that goes with the adult when they stop in and out of a program. As Gretchen said, life often makes it very difficult to, you know, stick in a program. So if we had these more transportable, you know, systems that lots of service providers could interact with, I think it would really build the kind of persistence that we see as being essential to adults reaching their dreams.

Mr. GUTHRIE. I see my yellow light real quick, and I just want to comment, because I am not going to be able to ask a question, on the ESL. If the mother's education level correlates, then if you have a mother that is not educated in her native language and doesn't speak English as a first language, that is an area we definitely have to address, and hopefully we will do that this summer.

And then on the tipping point, and I won't ask—I have got a red light—but how do you determine what is enough? Is there some standard you say that they have reached enough education? I think that was in the comment.

Ms. COOPER. The tipping point research indicated that enough to get to that bottom rung is essentially 1 year of college. In our State, that would be 45 credits and a recognized credential or certificate.

Chairman HINOJOSA. Very good.

I would like to now call on our friend, Congressman Andrews from New Jersey.

Mr. ANDREWS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for this series of hearings that you are holding. I find them to be very edifying, and I appreciate your efforts. I thank the panelists for excellent testimony.

Ms. Wilson, your testimony was powerful, and it just beautifully captured the reason we care so much about this issue, and I congratulate you for what you have accomplished in your life. It is very impressive. It is really great.

One of the things I am hearing from the panel is that research really needs to drive what we do on this law and in this program. Dr. Reder, in particular, I was interested in the longitudinal study in which you engaged, and I want to ask you some more questions about it. My understanding is you tracked 1,000 high school dropouts for 10 years; is that right?

Mr. REDER. Close to 10 years; 9 years plus, yes.

Mr. ANDREWS. How many of those 1,000 people were low literacy, at the two lowest levels of literacy?

Mr. REDER. We had a broad spectrum of skills. There were individuals—among the dropouts we followed, some actually had very high levels of skill; others had very low levels of skill. I would say it was a broad distribution. About a third of them over that 10-year period went on to get a GED.

Mr. ANDREWS. Well, the question I asked, though, is we have had testimony this morning that roughly 30 percent of the population is at the two lowest levels of literacy. Was that 30 percent tracked in your 1,000 sample, or was it higher than that?

Mr. REDER. I would say in Oregon, where we drew our sample, literacy levels are a little higher than they are in the rest of the country, but we have the full—we had the full range in our study.

Mr. ANDREWS. Of the subset of the 1,000 that had low literacy skills, how many of them accessed a literacy program during the 10 years?

Mr. REDER. I would say it was about 20 percent. That is a rough guess. I would have to go look.

Now, one of the things that is different in our population is that it was restricted in age, so people were 18 to 44 years old at the beginning of our study. So we didn't have the older population who tends not to participate. That is why that number is a little higher. We also did not have—we had nonnative speakers of English, but not low levels of English proficiency.

Mr. ANDREWS. Now, is it correct that the 20 percent or so that accessed literacy programs had a better success rate in terms of employment and earnings than the 80 percent who did not?

Mr. REDER. When you look over a long time period, that is correct. That is one of the events I said we need to really follow people over long periods of time.

Mr. ANDREWS. By what order of magnitude did they have greater success? Did 20 percent more have jobs and make 30 percent more money? What order of magnitude of that success?

Mr. REDER. I am going to have to actually, you know, provide more information. I don't have that—

Mr. ANDREWS. I tell you why I ask these questions. This is not a Jeopardy round here.

The argument that we will always hear when we try to fund a program like we are talking about today is, well, everybody wants funded and everything is desirable. This strikes me as a particularly great example of how a dollar invested can multiply many, many, many times over.

I suspect that the cost of literacy services for those 20 percent that access the program wasn't very much at all, but the taxes that they paid because of the income they made far, far exceeded the amount that was invested. It would be very helpful for the Chairman and the rest of us, as we try to increase the money for this program, to be able to master those facts and be able to commend. So you would be a big help to us in that regard.

The final question I want to ask was about distance learning. Is anybody aware of any data that would show the differences, if any, in the performance for distance-learning services versus traditional services? In other words, one of the things people sometimes suspect about distance learning is it is not as effective as in-person learning. I don't accept that premise at all, and I would be interested if anybody has any data about the quality of performance in literacy programs for distance learning as opposed to traditional.

Mr. REDER. I don't have that data, but I know where you can get it. The State of California, that has a very extensive distance education component in their adult education program, has quite a bit of data on the effectiveness of traditional classes, on-line classes and blended classes; that is, classes where students both go to traditional classrooms as well as use on line.

Mr. ANDREWS. One of the reasons that I raise this issue is it has both cost and equity implications. A lot of our individuals we are trying to help here live in rural areas that are not easily accessible to schools and other institutions. And then, frankly, those who live in urban areas have transportation issues and child-rearing issues. It just isn't very easy to get where you need to get at a given time.

And I am interested in whether distance learning helps to solve those problems, whether it is effective or not. I suspect that it is.

Ms. WILSON, did you want to say something about that?

Ms. WILSON. I just wanted to say that I didn't have time. I wanted to be at this program.

Mr. ANDREWS. How old is your daughter, by the way?

Ms. WILSON. She is eight.

Mr. ANDREWS. Is she here?

Ms. WILSON. Yeah.

Mr. ANDREWS. Well, that is great. She should be very proud of her mom, and someday she will be up here testifying. That is great.

Ms. WILSON. But I didn't have the time that I know that they really wanted me to have to be able to sit in there and be one on one and be in that classroom. I had to take the books and learn and go on tour and to study out there and to soak up everything I could. It seemed to work just fine for me because I wanted it. And I really think it would solve a lot of the people's financial problems: Well, I can't go in there and work on this education because I have to be at work; they can study away from a classroom. They can actually do it on their own time.

Mr. ANDREWS. I suspect that you probably do a lot of things at 2:00 and 3:00 in the morning, because that is the only time you

had to do them as a mom, as a working mom, but if some of that could be your coursework, I assume it would work very well.

Ms. WILSON. Yes.

Mr. ANDREWS. I am very interested in whatever we can do, Mr. Chairman, to validate that interest in distance learning.

Chairman HINOJOSA. If any of the panelists can give us answers to Mr. Andrews' questions, we would appreciate it.

[The information, submitted by Mr. Reder, follows:]



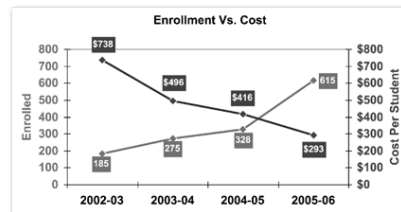
Numbers of ABE / ESL Distance Students Nationally

- ~100,000 distance students, 2,677,000 classroom students = 3.6% of the total
- Only 10,000 studying computer- or Internet-based programs
- Most states with distance programs are small: 300 – 1500 distance learners overall

What's Possible With Best Practices – Ohio and North Carolina

- **GED Prep.** In 2005-06 Ohio had 615 distance learners studying for their GED. They averaged 16 weeks in the program and earned, on average, 32 proxy contact hours (PCH). One quarter earned more than 40 PCH and were post-tested. Of these, 63% made a gain of one or more EFL.
- **ESL.** In 2005-06 North Carolina had 396 distance learners studying English. They averaged 14 weeks in the programs and earned on average 66 PCH. Of those who post-tested, 44% made a gain of 1 or more EFL. This increased to 56% the next year.
- In general the results for distance compare favorably with classroom programs, except that the percentage posttesting is lower in distance programs
- After initial startup, distance education is cost effective

OHIO: AS ENROLLMENT INCREASES, COST DECREASES



Predictors of learner success: 10 hrs/week available to study, took a classroom course in last 5 years, technology access at home, strong desire for further education, doesn't feel a need to be in a class to learn.

Challenges: how to motivate learners to persist longer, how to increase the numbers post-testing, and whether to serve new or existing learners—to serve more is to spend more.

From Jerome Johnston and Leslie Petty (forthcoming). Distance Learning—Expanding Options in Adult Education. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, Institute for Social Research, Project IDEAL Support Center.

Project IDEAL Support Center • Institute for Social Research • University of Michigan
jere.johnston@umich.edu • <http://projectideal.org>

Mr. ANDREWS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the panel.
Chairman HINOJOSA. At this time I would like to call on Congressman Roe and have him ask his questions.

Mr. ROE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I must have gone the other way. I overdosed on education. I was in school for 24 years, so—but thank you, Gretchen, for being here today, and it is Grace that is back here. We didn't introduce her earlier, and I apologize for that.

I think that you weren't lucky. I think you are very talented and worked very hard, and I think that is—I think that is the impression that you have given everybody, and that is what you want to do to motivate people to get them to do what you did. You can do it if you want to. Just what you said, how busy you were—and you are incredibly busy—to be able to take the time, you place the importance on it. I think that is one of the problems that we have in education is that we don't value it. It is an investment, not a cost.

And as we were talking in our meeting before here, if you get a high school education, you will earn a half million dollars more in your lifetime; and if you have a college education, you will earn a million dollars more on average in your lifetime, which changes not only your life, but your family and those around you and your friends.

Mr. Andrews asked an excellent question. He had to leave. But in Tennessee I supplied some data where 14,000 or so GEDs were issued in 2007 and 2008, and this was at a cost of only \$275.19 per student. If there is not a better investment in the world, I don't know it, and I have seen any number of programs come through where we spend \$5-, \$10-, \$15,000 per participant. In the State of Tennessee, \$275.19, and that improved that person's who got that GED, their income, by over \$9,000 a year. And you multiply that times 14,000, and you get how much more tax dollars came in, not going out.

So I think that answers the question. And I am sure this same data is available in every State in the Union.

Workforce development is a huge issue, and, Dave, I want to ask you if you could expound on if the education level makes it difficult for you to find qualified employees for your business.

Mr. BERÉ. Yes, there is no question. As I said in my testimony, when I first got into this, I was really astounded by the statistics and worried about our own growth plans as we were going forward. And I think another big awareness of the issue is we have got to get the business community to really understand that this is a big issue, and that we are going to be in trouble as a business community if we don't solve this relatively quickly.

It really comes down to, you know, every job that we have at Dollar General or any company, whether it be in the distribution center, whether it be in the stores, there is certain basic skills that you need, and some people don't even have the chance to even get to that level. But once you get to that level, then you have to keep growing your skill set. So having on-site training programs is something that is extremely important.

And then the other piece is it changes. The technology changes. Every year in our distribution system we are putting in new capital that require new skills to run that capital. We have new POS systems that go into our stores. So it is a constant building of skills over time, and your great companies, if they figure out how to do this constantly, do that. The issue we have here is that there are

some basic skills that they can't get to second, third and fourth level.

Mr. ROE. I recall one of my anatomy professors in medical school said, I can teach you to practice medicine 1 year 25 times, or I can teach you to practice 25 years. And what you are saying is that is a lifelong learning, and I think what we have heard today, we have the No Child Left Behind Act. We should have the No Adult Left Behind Act.

As mayor of our city, Johnson City, Tennessee, before I came here, that was one of the great challenges I discovered was how do we get the folks out there who are talented and bright, how do we get them educated, and that is a real challenge. And I think one of the greatest challenges we have in this country, as we spoke before, there are more honor students in China than we have students in America. So we have got to get with it, and this is an opportunity, I think. It is a huge opportunity to spend a little bit of money and get a humongous result.

My light is on. I thank all of you, and I yield back my time.

Chairman HINOJOSA. Thank you.

At this time, I would like to call on the gentleman from Colorado, Congressman Jared Polis.

Mr. POLIS. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman.

The percentage of exiters from the adult program with limited English proficiency who received intensive training has dropped considerably from a high of 8 percent in 2002 to 3.8 percent in 2007, by more than half. I think we all know and suspect that that is not because of a lack of demand or a reduction in the need for these services.

In addition, the share of exiters who are coenrolled in Title I and Title II decreased from 2.5 percent in 2001 to .2 percent in 2002. In my home State of Colorado, Title II serves only an estimated 3 percent of the target population.

My first question is for Dr. Kinerney, and it is about what changes do you recommend in the reauthorization of WIA to help reverse these trends? Not the obvious one of increasing funding, but sort of taking that one aside, what structural changes can, in fact, reverse this trend of what has happened, which is, in fact, these services have moved away from serving limited-English-language proficiency people, which seem to be one of the—in fact, in Colorado, my home State, one of the biggest growth needs and markets. And what ideas do you have absent outside of just resources in terms of collaboration between Title I and Title II, other ideas?

Ms. KINERNEY. I think there is an opportunity here for technology. I would share that with my colleagues here.

We don't really know, and we need to understand better, who has access to computers. In our program, for example, we take all of our EL/civics students, we take them to the libraries, we show them computer labs, and we want to make sure that people have access to that. But yet I am hearing now that students at our refugee training programs are bringing computers with them, laptops with them, from refugee camps. So I think there is really an unexplored opportunity here to utilize that technology and come up with some new ways to perhaps serve these folks.

Mr. POLIS. If I could follow up on that. You know, it is unlikely that the new technology would be a requirement or kind of top down. How do we create an environment that allows for on-line, new technology to effectively compete for these funds from the bottom up, and does the current way that we spend these funds prevent the type of use of technology that you are referring to?

Ms. KINERNEY. I wish I had a solution for all of this. I think that—

Mr. POLIS. And I would open that up if anybody else would care to comment.

Ms. KINERNEY. When we use technology for language learning, I think we also have to be really cognizant that communication and language learning is a very human activity. So, we do have to build in opportunities for people to connect on multiple levels. It is not just simply that I can sit there at a computer with a piece of software or on a Web site and hope to learn English. I need to have real connection with other people, because there is no way a piece of software is going to be able to predict what other people do.

So I don't know exactly what the solution is going to be, but I would say, too, that the technology, if we could wrap that in with that human piece where people have the opportunity to either go into class for short periods, perhaps work with volunteers, utilize—like with the Learner Web, I know they have volunteers from across the U.S. that can help with folks who are in a classroom maybe in a very different geographic region. And so looking at different ways that we can interface with those programs might work.

Mr. POLIS. I want to open that up, but before I do, I also want to add I think another important aspect is predictability. And one of the difficulties in planning around these funds is the lack of this reauthorization and for several years a continuation.

So, I mean, whenever you are talking technology, you are generally talking some capital investment. I think providers want to know if this is something that is going to be here in 2 or 3 years, what is the revenue stream going to be like for 3 years as it applied in the use of technology, and that has been very, very, very difficult, impossible really, in this environment in the last few years.

Any other ideas about either how we can better open up to technology or other ways to serve more lab people?

Mr. FINSTERBUSCH. What I allude to in here is don't just think of technology as the on-line technology in the classroom. Think about your cell phone. That is the lessons.

What we are hearing, talk to texts. You know, I am hearing, for instance, if you are texting, you will be able to talk in English, and it comes out in another language. Or a workplace, where a manager has employees that speak in another language, boom.

These are the kind of skills, technology, that I think we need to look into to get the adult learners the tools on their jobs and in their communities; not just think of technology for the classroom, but what technologies that corporations are developing, that we are using every day, and give the adult learners the tools in their hands that goes with them.

So I think we need to look in investing in that kind of technology, speech to text, so people can pump out writing materials or

get that writing material back to them if they don't have the skills. So if you have employees that can't read that text, there is a pen that will scan a page and will read it to them. The employee just got all the information they needed without sitting in a classroom that particular month, or 3 years, or whatever.

So when you think of technology, I really think, stop just thinking on line technology, long distance. Think about what the person has in their pockets.

Mr. POLIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman HINOJOSA. At this time, I would like to call on Congressman Castle from Delaware.

Mr. CASTLE. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and I don't disagree with anything that I have heard here today from the panelists or from those asking questions, but I certainly would like to shift gears a little bit if I could.

And I will start, I think, with Ms. Wilson and Mr. Finsterbusch and their own personal experiences. But my concern is, how did we get in the position that we are in? Why do people drop out of school, whatever it may be? And we have these sessions here, and we read these high-falutin' reports or whatever it may, but maybe we all have a fairly good idea of all this.

But I am worried about the common culture; that is, I am worried about television, perhaps the people Ms. Wilson sings to, whatever it may be. I mean, how can we make sure the people grasp the fact that they need to be educated? I think it was Dr. Roe who indicated the earnings numbers: If you graduate from high school, it is another half-million dollars, and from college it is another million dollars.

I am not sure people really understand that, or if they do, it is sort of a fact. But how can we take this culture into television shows, into the performers in our country who—LeBron James is somebody who can say, maybe you are not going to be as good as I am, but you have got to get educated, or whatever it may be.

I worry about it being too much on an intellectual plain and not hitting home with people, and I am talking about folks staying in school. And we have lot of other problems with that in early education and everything else, but I am also talking about going back with the programs we are talking about today, the adult literacy, more than just us talking about it, but making sure the people grasp the significance of this and how it can help them.

Any answers anybody has?

Ms. WILSON. I mean, the first part of your question, why do people drop out of school, it is people like me. I am a trailer park girl. I mean, I ate peanut butter and jelly and hot dogs every day. I was one of those people. I dropped out of school because my household was horrible. Mostly people I knew dropped out of school because they needed to go to work. They needed three people in the family working, not one.

There is so many different—some people—I moved. My parents had me in—I went to a different school every 3 months, I think. I was constantly being introduced to new people and new teachers, and really, if I had stayed in school, I don't think I would have made it through anyway, because some schools had different credit

programs than other schools have, and I would have ended up not having what I needed to graduate.

I think there is lots and lots of different reasons why people don't stay in school.

Mr. CASTLE. Is there anything that would have kept you in school in retrospect, looking back now?

Ms. WILSON. Not in the house that I was in, but you know—and I hate to say it, but I think there is a lot of that that we don't see, too, that doesn't get discussed.

But as far as how we can get people like me to recognize the importance—and I, myself, there is lots of things I can do just being a celebrity and being in the public eye. There are things that I am already doing. I am doing interviews with anybody I can about it. I am talking to radio stations all over the United States, which reaches millions of people, and discussing the importance and what it has done for me, and how it wasn't something I had to do, but how much it has affected my life and my family's life and so many other people around me, made them feel better about themselves. It is making us a stronger America.

Mr. CASTLE. Are your fellow entertainers doing what you are doing do you think?

Ms. WILSON. I am sorry?

Mr. CASTLE. Are your fellow entertainers doing what you are doing do you think?

Ms. WILSON. I think everybody that I know in the entertainment industry has a passion. This is my passion. I can tell you—

Mr. CASTLE. Your passion for educating?

Ms. WILSON. Well, I know a few of them. I know a few of them. I know a couple of them that came to me as soon as this was finished and asked me how hard it was, because they are not capable of reading themselves.

Mr. CASTLE. Okay. Mr. Finsterbusch.

Mr. FINSTERBUSCH. I can share why people don't come into programs. One, we haven't addressed it here. There is a real stigma, a fear for people coming forward and saying, I need help. People do—when you say—and there is a lot of adult learners in this audience today, and I bet you almost every one of them had experienced, when they declared, I am an adult learner, people treat them differently. People that treated—talked to us as an equal, and all of a sudden they do talk to us differently or down to us. And so there is a fear of coming forward and saying, I need help. And there is not enough champions out there saying, I am an adult learner.

And so programs need to work on this. There is that out there. It is not talked much about in our society, that we do look down on people that have less education. We might lack education, but we now as adults have a lot of life experience and other skills. But that is not what—and then the other issue is—and I just lost my thought, and I apologize—is—I had it, and I lost it because I got nervous again. I have to calm down.

So it is the stigma issue, and I will—it will come back to me. I am going to have to pass on, but there is a piece to that, I am sorry. She took me on—I am sorry—it is not fear of failing, as someone just mentioned. It is that a lot of people in our society

don't really know they have a literacy problem. It really doesn't hit them until a crisis or something else happens, like the loss of a job or like the spouse that I said earlier, because they got their education many years ago, or they were able to get through the system so we have a high school diploma. I had a high school diploma, but that wouldn't translate to a good job if they tested me coming into that job now.

So a lot of people don't realize it until something happens, and then it is immediate need. And so I think when they did a test on who had reading levels, a lot of people didn't think they had a literacy problem, but when they got tested, they needed literacy help. So that is a problem why people don't come in to getting help for literacy.

Mr. CASTLE. If the Chairman will allow?

Chairman HINOJOSA. I will give you another minute, and then I have to move forward.

Mr. CASTLE. Okay. Thank you.

Mr. BERÉ, did you want to say something?

Mr. BERÉ. I was going to say maybe another issue here is the job landscape is changing. So there was a time where you didn't need a high school education, and you could still be assured of a job. Now the requirements are so changing that there is now that gap, and I think people are waking up and saying, my goodness, I don't have the skill set, and so that could be another reason.

Mr. CASTLE. Exactly. Thank you.

Chairman HINOJOSA. At this time, I would like to call on Congressman John Tierney from Massachusetts.

Mr. TIERNEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for putting together such a great panel on this subject today.

It is about a dozen years ago we were still dealing with this issue. In Massachusetts, we had over 20,000 people in a waiting line to get any services, and unfortunately that hasn't shrunk at all.

Mr. Finsterbusch, you are a great example out here, and we want to thank you for coming forward. I think your presence here today will do a lot, as will Ms. Wilson's. And Ms. Wilson, you are not such a "Redneck Woman" after all. You have really just proven that and probably ruined your whole career just by coming forward here today.

Mr. Finsterbusch, we are told that some of the community-based organizations are having trouble accessing Title II funds, that the States are hoarding them. Do you have any comments on that or anything you think we can do in reauthorization that might free that up a little bit? I didn't say it was going to be easy.

Mr. FINSTERBUSCH. A lot of community-based programs really try to meet the needs of the adult learners in their communities. The moneys coming through the departments have rules. You have to have a student that will meet a certain amount of hours. They have to have this, they have to—you know, right now they don't count on record if you don't do 14 hours, so that student is not counted on the books. And so some programs choose not to opt, and others, because of the way the funding flows, it goes to the community colleges, and the community colleges decide how the money

goes out. And so the CBOs sometimes get left out of that money flow.

There is somehow—the community-based programs are in the community, and a lot of people are able to find them. They are having problems navigating that fragmented system.

Mr. TIERNEY. So some flexibility and some assistance on that?

Mr. FINSTERBUSCH. Yes.

Mr. TIERNEY. Access is one thing that I think, Mr. Beré, I want to address a question to you on this. I think businesses have responsibility, and I thank you for Dollar General stepping forward on that.

We had some great ideas in our community about trying to get businesses to partner without trying to bribe them in the Tax Code, whatever; get them to understand their own self-interest. We had companies that would provide their site and some of their personnel for a half-hour and hour before work, and then let the people stay on for a half-hour or hour into work on their dime. And we had tremendous participation from people in that.

A large company came in, bought them out, nixed the program, gave a small check to a community organization, thought they were doing just as well.

When you talk about access to the program, it seems to me the workplace is a great place for people to access it. How do we entice businesses to participate in a program like that and get more involved without feeling the need to be bribed in?

Mr. BERÉ. Well, I, first of all, agree with you that the business community needs to step up. We are clearly part of the solution here, and as I mentioned earlier, I think it really is about partnership.

I think there are two things. One is the business community, and I said this earlier, needs to become aware. I really don't think they understand the long-term implications of this and the implications to themselves as this is going on, and they have to treat this as an investment.

I think the second piece, it is a cultural thing. There are just some companies who care, and they are worried about this; you know, companies like McDonald's, what they have done with their own McDonald House and things like that. So I think the best thing we can do is increase awareness, realize that this is really a national problem, and that we have got to work together, and only by working through partnerships is this thing going to get done. You can't solve it alone, we can't solve it alone, the States can't solve it alone.

Mr. TIERNEY. Ms. Cooper, Ms. Lanterman, you both talked about good programs that you are running. We need to bring them up to scale.

I assume neither one of you wants to relinquish your program and adopt the other's in full bore on that, and we want to allow both or some innovation in different ways for different areas on that, but we need to bring them up to scale. We have done that a little bit with I-BEST. We have gone, I think, from 10 to 130-odd programs, but that is still not serving all of your State's population, never mind the rest of the country.

Give us some ideas on what we could do on reauthorization that would allow good programs to be acknowledged and then be brought up to scale.

Ms. COOPER. I think I referred to that a bit earlier when I talked about the importance of what it is that we measure and what it is that we allow to be counted as instruction for goals. So I think looking at the accountability system and being really clear about what it is that we look for as we move people forward. I think that that would be helpful.

As well, I think the law is not clear about allowing a very richly contextual instruction that focuses on work, and I think it has been interpreted as well more rigidly than it might be. So I think those are places we might look.

Mr. TIERNEY. Thank you.

Ms. LANTERMAN. I would just like to add about the family literacy model and really highlighting that as a way to remove the barriers that we have been talking about.

Every adult in our program talks about they would not be able to do this, go back to school, without the care for their children. And the motivation behind learning in the classroom with their children is very powerful not only for themselves, when they see themselves as growing and learning, but to help their children.

So, again, just highlighting the family literacy model which brings the partnerships in place that we have been talking about here, as well as the private sector and the public sector.

Mr. TIERNEY. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman HINOJOSA. Thank you.

I now would like to call on my friend Congresswoman Biggert.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for holding this hearing. I have got just a couple of questions.

Ms. Cooper, have you seen an increase in the demand for your educational services change since the current recession began?

Ms. COOPER. Yes. I would say this was—this fall was one of the largest enrollments for adult basic education in the history of our State, and that was before the effects of the recession. Since the recession began, our State, like many others, has experienced significant layoffs, and that is a time when adult workers often look for more education. So at the very time that we are seeing reduction in funds, it has been very difficult for our programs to expand their doors to let even more people come in in a very purposeful way, so that as the economy recovers, these workers will be prepared to move into those good-paying jobs.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Have you put in any special programs for returning veterans who want to upgrade their skills? Are they a part of this mix that is coming in?

Ms. COOPER. They are part of that mix, and they are part of this mix that is well-recognized in Washington State as an important population.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Okay. Then, Ms. Lanterman, how—can your family program be used in traditional schools, a classroom setting?

Ms. LANTERMAN. Absolutely. We just expanded to three elementary school sites, and it has been so exciting to see how that works with kindergarten, first, second-grade children. Parents are in their child's classroom for 2 hours a week, watching the teacher strate-

gies, the reading instruction piece. They go back into their adult ed classroom. They are able to work with their teacher on what the strategies are, how can they work and help with their children's homework. So they are learning again side by side with their children. The results so far have just been fantastic to watch.

Mrs. BIGGERT. It sounds like a great program, and I think you said in your testimony that you got this grant, and there were 200 other groups competing for this grant. So it sounds like people are really looking for something like this.

Ms. LANTERMAN. We are addressing the parent needs as well, because as adult reentry students, they are not just adults, they are—the majority of them are parents. So they get to address those needs, relieve those barriers, become involved in their children's education. They are leaders at their school sites. They are PTA presidents. They are all on the school site councils.

The teachers see them now as true partners. I had one teacher say, this parent said that she didn't think I was going to fit as her child's teacher—be a teacher best, and she said this was going to be a problem parent, and since she joined the Toyota Family Literacy Program, they have a true relationship now, and they can work side by side. She saw this parent as a problem parent, and the parent saw it as a problem teacher, but now the child benefits.

Mrs. BIGGERT. I would suspect, too, that, you know, one thing is all of us who have been parents have been involved in this, are the homework—

Ms. LANTERMAN. Yes.

Mrs. BIGGERT [continuing]. That our children bring home, and I would imagine that that would really be a help for the parents to be much more engaged in helping.

Ms. LANTERMAN. It is essential. I am an educator and educated, and my kindergartner comes home or my sixth grader comes home, and I can't understand sometimes, and I am thinking here are these parents that don't have those skills, and we are giving them those skills, and they are learning again for themselves, but able to help their children.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Well, you see it wanting to expand in your area. Do you think that this is going to be something that will really take place, or how can we encourage other places or—I guess it is the funding that is going to drive this issue; is that correct?

Ms. LANTERMAN. Yes. The support and the funding and just what you are doing here today, sharing best practices, innovations, what partnerships that can be formed, because this is a partnership. I don't get lots of money. The money that we receive is just enough to coordinate those pieces. I don't pay for the adult ed. I don't pay for the early childhood. It is just the coordination of that so that we are really strengthening the family and all the learners in the family.

Mrs. BIGGERT. What about the children, like zero to three, is that part of this, too?

Ms. LANTERMAN. Yes. We have a toddler program. So it is, again, parents going into that toddler classroom, learning the importance of brain development, what they can do with their children. We have parents saying, I didn't know I could read to them at that age. I didn't think they could learn the alphabet. We have one fam-

ily that wouldn't even allow their 1-year-old to walk, so they were afraid she was going to fall.

So much child development is in place, but again, the literacy skills and, again, for them to be able to work with their children in their home, and that goes—that is critical right—for both zero to 3, we are not reaching them at that preschool or beyond. It is right in the beginning of their learning years.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Thank you. Thank you for all you do. I yield back.

Chairman HINOJOSA. Thank you, Congresswoman Biggert. I think that your questions bring validity to the literacy recommendations that have been given by several of today's witnesses, and I want to commend you, Ms. Lanterman, in bringing up the success of the Toyota National Center for Family Literacy, because the area that I represent in deep south Texas has a very high percentage of families below the national poverty level.

So a couple of years ago we started an effort, an initiative that would focus on children from age 1 to sixth grade, which is age 12, and we invited the RIF program, which is Reading Is Fundamental, because they have the textbooks for children of all ages. And we also invited Toyota to see if they would bring this model of NCFL and help us, because we found that unless there is family participation and parental involvement in reading to a child, 1-year old, 2-year-old, 3-year-old, we can't possibly be successful in teaching them the art of learning. And it works for all ages, just like we have learned here from several panelists.

But Toyota has been especially generous in the deep south Texas program in helping us with funding so that we can have that parental involvement. So I certainly recommend that to you.

I would like to call on the Congresswoman from the State of Nevada, Congresswoman Titus, who has had a very difficult time with the jobless rate in the State of Nevada and has volunteered to host our next congressional field hearing in her State. It is going to be on Friday, May 29th, and that is another step that will get us closer and closer to be able to write the legislation that will reauthorize the WIA Act for 2009. So I would like to call on her for her questions.

Ms. TITUS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for coming to Las Vegas. We do have the worst unemployment that we have had in 25 years, and it is very important to us to look at this legislation, and your work on that is most appreciated. So thank you.

If I could just kind of sum up, we heard from all of you that adult literacy programs are needed, they are wanted, they can change lives, they should be continued, but with greater funding and some reforms, and, I think, make them more accessible, more relevant, more timely, more accountable and more technologically up to date. That is kind of what I have been hearing.

But I would like to step back a little further and ask you, if we were to do all that, and I think there is a feeling that we need to do, a general consensus about those things, are we really ready to move forward? Do we have the providers, the equipment, the infrastructure, the teachers to take advantage of these changes? For example, are there enough ESL teachers available? Are there mechanisms in place for public outreach to bring people into the pro-

gram? Do we have that in place, or do we need to do a little back-filling before we can move forward with these reforms? And anybody can answer. I would just address it generally.

Ms. KINERNEY. I will take a shot at that one.

Yes, we absolutely are not ready for—well, no, we are not ready to ramp up. We have a significant need for trained teachers regardless of the program level. We need significant more technology support and data systems to be able to pull this off. We need commitment from employers, more commitment from communities. There is a whole host of activities that we are going to need to undertake.

My personal concern is with making sure that we have a sufficient number of teachers who are well qualified and well trained and get those folks in the classrooms, because we just simply don't have them now, and even in my area it is difficult to find qualified and skilled folks, and in rural areas it is all that much more difficult.

Ms. COOPER. I would answer that question a little differently saying that we are absolutely ready to ramp up, but that there would be some areas in which the availability of planning money, money to produce more tailored and specific professional development for both existing part-time instructors and tutors, as well as recruitment of new people, would be very helpful.

Mr. REDER. I also think we are ready to ramp up. I think the committee needs to think very carefully in drafting the legislation about how to include all of the relevant players and providers in a community-by-community fashion so that we don't wind up with sort of top-down imposed systems that don't fit community needs, which we sometimes see in the current system. So I would urge you to, you know, craft the legislation in a way that will allow appropriate partnerships, that we have heard everyone, I think, talk about this morning, have their natural place in receiving the funding and in doing local planning collaboratively to really meet the needs of the adults and make sure we get them into family wage employment.

Ms. TITUS. Along these same lines, one of my concerns is that States won't pick up their end of the bargain. States especially that are so economically strapped like Nevada are States that this may not be a priority when you have a very small pie to divide up into a lot of pieces. Can you suggest any teeth that we might put in there to be sure that that doesn't happen and that we do see these kind of programs put in place where they are needed?

Mr. REDER. Well, I am not an expert on those types of things, but it seems to me that we may need to have multiple funding streams that can reach service providers perhaps in different ways, and perhaps there can be different incentives in the legislation for, you know, mixing streams and putting, you know, comprehensive programs into place.

Ms. COOPER. I would also say that we both have a great deal of support at the State level in Washington State. So I am grateful to come from a State with that sort of record. But I will tell you our experience would be that one of the ways you sort of both level the playing field and also really incent the kind of behavior that you like is to give people adequate time and money to plan, and then make some kinds of money available by application so that

people meet certain criteria. And that is the kind of model that we used with I-BEST in the beginning, and it has worked well for us in other ventures.

Mr. FINSTERBUSCH. I would have to say the field is ready. We want to do it, but we are not ready because we haven't dealt with the issues of the silos of adult education. From our viewpoint, you can say, let us do this, but until there is a clear navigation to help people navigate this, it is not going to succeed. People are going to drop out because they can't get through. And so we really do need to look at all the funding flows, and how do they relate to each other, and how do they support each other.

Right now we have got too many pockets all over the place and the coordination. So if you want to ramp up, it is the coordination that you are really going to need to look at and then look at we, the customers, needing part of this, and can we understand it, and can we navigate it, because if we can't, it won't succeed.

And so that is what I am going to recommend. There is a will. There is a will, but someone needs to sit down and say coordination, and get these silos start working with each other.

Ms. TITUS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman HINOJOSA. Thank you very much for your thoughtful questions.

I am coming to a close, and I want to take this opportunity in sharing with you that when the year started, we decided that we needed to hear from different regions of the country, both rural and urban and suburban areas. We were in Albany, New York, having a congressional field hearing and got their perspective. Now we are going to Nevada, and we have had people here in Washington representing different sectors.

And one thing that comes to mind is that having been a part of the reauthorization of WIA in 1998, I recall that we found difficulty in putting into the act some type of a cap on how much money could be spent with subcontractors and with those in administration, and the end result is that after looking back from 1998 to now, we see that there are regions where only 30 to 40 percent of the Federal money that came down for training individuals was all that was available.

The profit made by the subcontractors, the wasteful use of Federal and State money, some heavy administration costs, that has to be addressed. That needs to be addressed because I personally would like to see a minimum of 60 percent used for training our participants, adults. And if we don't address it, then I think you are going to have another 6 or 8 years of what we experienced the last 10.

Talk about it. Give us your ideas on how you are going to support legislation that would cap how much profit those subcontractors can make, and also the workforce development boards have controls so that administrative costs don't get out of hand. All of that is extremely important as we go into these next few months, and I can tell you that there are members of this committee who are very seriously considering how we can address this problem that I am laying on your lap.

Once again, I would like to thank each and every one of the witnesses and the members of the subcommittee for a very informative

session. As previously ordered, Members will have 14 days to submit additional materials for the hearing record.

[Additional submissions of Mr. Hinojosa follow:]

[Research Report No. 06-2, Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, April 2005]

Building Pathways to Success for Low-Skill Adult Students: Lessons for Community College Policy and Practice from a Longitudinal Student Tracking Study

(The "Tipping Point" Research)

According to the U.S. Census (2000), 42 percent of adults in the United States between the ages of 25 and 64 have no more than a high school education (authors' calculations). Unfortunately, however, most new jobs and the vast majority of jobs that pay wages sufficient to support a family require at least some education beyond high school (Carnevale & Derochers, 2003), and low educational attainment is associated with high rates of unemployment and poverty.

Community colleges are an important entry point to postsecondary education for adults with no previous college education or even a high school diploma. In fall 2002, for example, adults between the ages of 25 and 64 represented 35 percent of fulltime equivalent (FTE) enrollments at two-year public colleges, compared with only 15 percent of FTE undergraduate enrollments at four-year public institutions (authors' calculations, based on U.S. Department of Education, 2001). Moreover, more than two-thirds of the community college students who entered postsecondary education at age 25 or older were low income (authors' calculations based on

"Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study" [BPS:96/01], 2003). The potential of community colleges to serve as a "pathway" for lowskill adults to college and career-path employment, therefore, is evident. Across the nation, several major projects are underway whose goal is to develop policies and practices supportive of this role. Funded by national foundations, these initiatives include the Ford Foundation's Bridges to Opportunity initiative and the National Governor's Association's Pathways to Advancement project, funded by Lumina Foundation for Education.

Despite this interest, relatively little is known about the unique experiences and the educational and employment outcomes of adults who enter community college with limited education. We do know that their experiences and outcomes differ from those of traditional college-aged students. Compared with community college students who enrolled soon after high school (at ages 18-24), those who start later (at ages 25-64) are more likely to earn a certificate and less likely to earn an associate degree. The late starters are also far less likely to transfer to a four-year institution and earn a bachelor's degree. Indeed, among students who entered a community college for the first time in 1995-96, 60 percent of older first-time students did not earn any credential or transfer to a baccalaureate program after six years, compared with 40 percent of younger, first-time students (authors' calculations, based on BPS:96/01, 2003).

This Brief summarizes findings from a new study that seeks to fill information gaps about older community college students. Researchers used student record information from the Washington State Community and Technical College system to examine the educational experience and attainment as well as the employment and earnings of a sample of adult students, five years after first enrolling. The students in the sample were age 25 or older with, at most, a high school education. The study was conducted by staff at the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), with assistance from the Community College Research Center, as part of Ford's Bridges to Opportunity initiative. Its goal was to provide educators throughout Washington's community and technical college system with a detailed profile of their low-skill adult students, who make up about one-third of the approximately 300,000 students served by the system annually. The study also sought to identify the critical points where adult students drop out or fail to advance to the next level in order to help SBCTC staff stimulate thinking among educators throughout the system about how to bridge those gaps and thereby facilitate student advancement.

Study Sample

The study's data source was the system that the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges uses to track students in its 34 colleges. The database contains complete transcript information on every student who enrolls in college credit or non-credit courses.

The study sample consisted of two SBCTC cohorts: first-time college students who were adults age 25 or older with a high school education or less and who started in 1996-97 or in 1997-98. Also included in the cohorts were 18- to 24-year-old, first

time students who lacked a high school diploma or GED. These younger students were included because by not graduating from high school and enrolling at a community college, they had in effect entered the adult labor market, whether or not they were employed. The sample included students who enrolled in college-credit (including college remedial or “developmental”) or adult basic skills programs, which include adult basic education (ABE), English as a second language (ESL), and GED preparation. In Washington State, adult basic skills programs are provided through the community and technical colleges. Together the two cohorts totaled 34,956 students, or about one-third of all students who entered a community or technical college for the first time in Washington State in the two baseline years.

Females comprised the largest share of the student sample, reflecting a common pattern among students in community colleges. Whites made up more than half of the sample, and Latinos one-quarter. Students between the ages of 25 and 29 comprised the largest group. Over 70 percent had children; nearly one-quarter were single parents. Most of the students were working or seeking work. A little more than one-third were not in the labor force. The majority of the low-skill adults were low income.

The starting education level of the students also varied. Nearly one-third enrolled in an ESL program. Slightly more than one-third did not have a high school diploma and enrolled in adult basic education or GED programs. Approximately one-third of the students already had either a diploma or a GED.

Three-quarters of the high school diploma holders, and nearly 80 percent of GED holders, enrolled in occupational degree programs, reflecting the high interest of adult students in occupational programs. Forty percent of the students with a high school diploma or GED also took at least one developmental course. The majority of both GED and diploma holders who enrolled in academic transfer programs had to take at least one remedial course.

Study Findings

For both cohorts we used the transcript information in the SBCTC student database to track the educational progress of the different subgroups (defined in terms of the students’ starting education levels) five years after they entered a community or technical college. We used Unemployment Insurance wage record data from the Washington State Employment Security Department to examine the annual earnings of students five years after they started.

Student Educational Attainment and Earnings after Five Years

Only 13 percent of the students who started in ESL programs went on to earn at least some college credits. Less than one-third (30 percent) of adult basic education (ABE/GED) students made the transition to college-level courses. Only four to six percent of either group ended up getting 45 or more college credits or earning a certificate or degree within five years. (Washington’s community and technical colleges are on the quarter system, so 45 credits is equivalent to two full-time semesters of coursework, or 30 credits in semester systems.)

Nearly 30 percent of the students who started with a GED, and 35 percent of those who started with a high school diploma, earned at least 45 credits or a credential in five years. Fourteen percent of the students who started with a GED, and 18 percent of students who started with a high school diploma, earned an advanced certificate or an associate degree in five years.

Not surprisingly, the higher students’ educational attainment after five years, the higher the wages they earned on average. Compared with students who earned fewer than ten college credits, those who took at least one year’s worth of college-credit courses and earned a credential had an average annual earnings advantage: \$7,000 for students who started in ESL; \$8,500 for those who started in ABE or GED; and \$2,700 and \$1,700 for those entering with a GED or high school diploma, respectively.

These findings are consistent with previous research on the economic returns to a subbaccalaureate education. These studies show that earning an occupational certificate (equivalent to two semesters of full-time study) provides individuals with a significant earnings advantage compared with individuals with just some college but no degree, although the magnitude of the advantage varies by student gender and field of study (Bailey, Kienzl, & Marcotte, in press; Grubb, 2002; Kienzl, 2004). These studies have also found that the wage gains associated with postsecondary education of less than a year are negligible.

Advancement beyond English as a Second Language and Adult Basic Education

Only one percent of ESL students who started with less than a high school education earned a GED or high school diploma in five years. In all, 12 percent went beyond ESL and enrolled in college-credit courses. Of these, two-thirds had a high

school credential when they started in ESL. A much larger group of ESL students had a high school credential upon enrollment but went no further than ESL. Latino ESL students with a high school diploma were less than half as likely as other students to advance beyond basic skills. Males who earned a GED (particularly Latinos) were less likely than women to go further in their education. Part of this gender difference may result from the fact that, on average, men earn more than women, and thus forgo more wages when they attend school.

Thirty-one percent of the students who started in ABE or GED courses went on to enroll in at least one college-level course. Of this group, 70 percent, or 2,543 students, already had a high school credential. A larger group (3,245) also had a high school credential but went no further than basic skills, including 1,147 students who earned their GED or diploma at the college and left.

A number of factors seem to be associated with a greater likelihood that students who start in ESL or ABE/GED will go on to succeed in college-level courses. A higher percentage of students who succeeded in earning a credential or completing at least 45 credits received financial aid than did students who did not do either. In addition, students who took developmental education after taking ESL or ABE/GED were more likely to earn a credential or at least 45 credits than were those who did not. Students who expected up-front that they would attend college a year or longer were more successful than were students who did not know upon enrollment how long they would attend or those for whom information on their expectations for college was not available.

Although financial aid and developmental education were associated with higher chances of success, many students who went beyond ESL or ABE/GED did not receive these supports. Only about 23 percent of students who transitioned from ESL, and 35 percent of those who transitioned from ABE, received financial aid when they enrolled in college-level courses. Only 28 percent of ESL students who transitioned, and 33 percent of transitioning ABE students, enrolled in developmental courses. Moreover, less than one-third of ESL and ABE/GED students expected to attend college for a year or more. About half (54 percent) of ESL students, and 47 percent of ABE/GED students, did not have clear plans or their intent was not ascertained.

Implications for Policy and Practice

This study of students in the Washington State Community and Technical College system finds evidence that attending college for at least one year and earning a credential provides a substantial boost in earnings for adults with a high school diploma or less who enter higher education through a community college. These findings are consistent with studies that have used nationally representative samples of community college students.

Short-term training, such as the type often provided to welfare recipients seeking to enter the workforce, may help individuals get into the labor market, but it usually does not help them advance beyond low-paying jobs. Neither does an adult basic skills education by itself nor a limited number of college-level courses provide much benefit in terms of either employment or earnings. Another recent study of Washington State community college students (Hollenbeck & Huang, 2003) found that adult basic skills programs had no impact on wages and had only a modest impact on average rates of employment in the long term (but not the short term). In contrast, individuals who went through community college occupational degree programs were eight percent more likely to be employed, and they earned over \$4,400 per year more on average than did similar individuals in Washington's labor force who did not enroll in any training program. Only individuals who took basic skills courses concurrently with vocational training enjoyed a significant benefit in average rates of employment and quarterly earnings.

Another study (Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board [WTECB], 2004), drawing on occupational forecasts by Washington State's Employment Security Department, shows that not only do workers with at least a year of college and a credential earn substantially more than do those with just some or no college, but that they are in higher demand among employers, at least in Washington State.

The findings from all of these studies of Washington State indicate that community and technical colleges should consider making at least one year of college-level courses and earning a credential a minimum goal for the many low-skill adults they serve. While hundreds of low-skill adult students in our sample were able to achieve this threshold level of attainment in five years, many more did not. Eight out of ten students in ABE or ESL were able to make modest skill gains, at best earning a GED, but did not advance to college-level courses. Seven out of ten students who had a GED and took college-credit courses left with less (and often a lot less) than

a year of college credit and no credential. This is also true for the more than two out of three students who had a high school diploma and took college courses.

To enable low-skill adults to achieve the threshold level of one year of college plus a credential or more, community colleges in Washington State and elsewhere should rethink their programs and services. For example, the study summarized here found that there are students—the 69 percent of ABE and ESL students who make the transition to college-level work with a high school diploma or GED in hand—who are eligible to receive financial aid and developmental education. These supports would make it two to three times more likely that they would earn a credential, but, at best, only one-third of these students receive them. Therefore, it would be useful for basic skills and developmental education faculty to work together to encourage students to take advantage of developmental courses and to work with counseling and student services staff to ensure that eligible students apply for financial aid.

In addition, support should be given to the far larger group of students who have or earn a high school diploma or GED but never go beyond basic skills in community college. More aggressive efforts to educate them about their college education opportunities, combined with “bridge programs” that ease their transition to college, might increase their enrollment and success in college-level programs.

Finally, since short-term training that is focused on getting low-skilled adults a job generally does not result in earnings gains over time when students do not continue their education, colleges could help students avoid dead-end starts by ensuring that short-term training options lead to real educational attainment in the long term.

A commuter transit system that is run on the schedule of working adults and that can accommodate on-and-off traffic, but still makes connections to long-term destinations, may be an apt metaphor for an education system effective in serving low-skill adults. Such a system would provide a clear map of the educational pathways that students can follow to advance in their jobs and pursue further education, indicating where they can “stop out” of education for a time and reenter as they are able. The system would give students a lot of guidance and support so they do not get lost as they leave and reenter college, and would allow adults to go farther and faster than they do in the conventional college system.

Rethinking existing community college programs to create more of an educational transit system has to be done collaboratively, involving faculty and staff from across the academic and administrative divisions or “silos” that characterize most community colleges and higher education institutions generally. The Washington State Community and Technical College system is taking steps to break down those silos by sharing the results of this study widely among its faculty, staff, and administrators. Member colleges interested in improving outcomes for lowskill adult students have been invited to organize teams from across their various divisions—basic skills, academic transfer (where developmental education is typically housed), workforce education, and student services—to reflect on the state-level data from this study and on similar data from their own colleges. The aim is to encourage these crossdivisional teams to eliminate roadblocks to advancement and create pathways to educational and economic success for their many low-skill adult students.

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COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES,
DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS, POST OFFICE BOX 751,
Portland, OR, May 14, 2009.

Hon. RUBÉN HINOJOSA, *Chair*; Hon. BRETT GUTHRIE, *Ranking Member*,
*Subcommittee on Higher Education, Lifelong Learning, and Competitiveness, House
Committee on Education and Labor, Washington, DC.*

DEAR REPRESENTATIVES HINOJOSA AND GUTHRIE: Thank you for the opportunity to testify before your Subcommittee on May 5, 2009 and share my views about the importance of research in making WIA maximally effective. I am writing to share some specific suggestions for the Subcommittee to consider about the need for WIA to establish a strong, independent research and development center for adult literacy.

To support the goals of WIA more effectively, the field of adult literacy needs a strong, independent R&D center. Although the Department of Education (OERI and later IES) funded such a center at the University of Pennsylvania from 1991-1996 and at Harvard University from 1996-2007, OERI/IES staff were consistently indifferent and sometimes antagonistic towards the field. Funding for such a center has been discontinued for more than two years.

To be effective, the R&D center needs to be independent of political and agency pressures that would repeatedly try to redefine its priorities and agenda from year-to-year. The Center should be housed within a university or network of collaborating universities having expertise and experience in the field. The Center must be able to pursue a stable, long-term R&D agenda that has been carefully crafted by researchers, practitioners, policy-makers and other experts and stakeholders in the field. Its work should be guided by an advisory board (whose role is only advisory) and use research designs and produce publications that benefit from peer-review processes.

The work of the R&D center will have practical implications for a number of federal departments—including Education, Labor, Health and Human Services, in particular, but also Justice, Defense and Homeland Security among others. Administering the center within a multi-agency setting such as the National Institute for Literacy would thus seem to make sense. Although NIFL has accomplished some worthwhile things, it does not have the size, capacity or structure in its current form to effectively manage a strong, independent R&D center. (The President has recently proposed to disband NIFL. If the President and the Congress decide to refocus NIFL on adults, redesign its structure to be more cost-effective, and provide it with qualified leadership and staff, then it might be a proper place to administer a new adult literacy R&D center grant.)

I recommend placing the Center in either Education or Labor. Wherever it is placed, it must be seen as serving a mission broader than that of any one Department. All Departments should be able to add funds, without having to engage in competitive bidding, to enhance the work funded by a base budget of at least \$10 million per year. The Center should not be placed in OVAE (the program branch of adult education) because the R&D agenda needs to be free from pressures to conform with services currently being implemented. If it were placed in Labor, which

has the capacity to manage such a center effectively, it is important to make clear that the Center's R&D agenda should address the needs of all adult literacy learners, including those at the lowest skill levels. The Employment and Training Administration (ETA) might be a logical management agency for the R&D Center grant.

The Center should have a mandate to:

- provide advice to the field that is based on the best available empirical research and professional wisdom
- pursue new research and experiment with new ways of supporting learning and delivering services
- support professional development through technical assistance and training
- build a knowledge and communications infrastructure for the field

Thank you again for the opportunity to share my views with the Subcommittee. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide additional information, answer questions, or otherwise assist you.

Sincerely,

STEPHEN REDER, PH.D., *University Professor and Chair,*
Department of Applied Linguistics.

Chairman HINOJOSA. If any Member who wishes to submit follow-up questions in writing to the witnesses should coordinate with Majority staff within the requisite time, and without objection, this congressional hearing is adjourned, and we thank you.

[Whereupon, at 12:05 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

