



National Coalition For Literacy

American Association for Adult and Continuing Education ◦ Adult Literacy Media Alliance ◦ American Institute for Research ◦ American Library Association ◦ Association of Adult Literacy Professional Developers ◦ Center for Literacy Studies, University of Tennessee ◦ Commission on Adult Basic Education ◦ Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy ◦ GED Testing Service ◦ Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy and the Goodling Institute for Research, Pennsylvania State University ◦ Literacy USA ◦ National Center for Family Literacy ◦ National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy ◦ National Center on Adult Literacy, University of Pennsylvania ◦ National Council of State Directors of Adult Education ◦ ProLiteracy Worldwide ◦ Student Coalition for Action in Literacy Education ◦ Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. ◦ Voice of Adult Literacy United for Education ◦ World Education

United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

November 9, 2005

Dear Congressman:

As the House of Representatives considers HR 4241 the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, the National Coalition for Literacy would like to express concerns over several of the provisions contained in the section of the bill dealing with amendments to TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families).

First, we are concerned about the inclusion of adult education as part of Program Coordination Demonstration Projects. Although we recognize a number of provisions are included in this project to protect program integrity, we oppose the inclusion of adult education in Section 601.

We are concerned that Section 601 gives a Governor – or perhaps a person administering an adult education program who does not report to the Governor – the ability to alter application procedures, reporting requirements, performance standards, and program and individual eligibility requirements of local programs. While the Secretary must approve proposed projects, there are a number of inadvertent effects that would negatively affect State's operations and management and could impact program performance.

For example, individual eligibility standards are laid out in the definition of adult education in Section 203 of the Workforce Investment Act. Spending adult education dollars on individuals not authorized under the Act would appear to us to in effect “waive a funding restriction applicable to a program authorized under an Act which is not an appropriations Act” [Sec. 601(d)(2)(H)]. Of course, individual eligibility standards could also be altered by restricting eligibility to only some of the permissible categories, e.g. serving only high school equivalency candidates or only persons with limited proficiency in English. This would require

major changes in the State's plan as well as the need to renegotiate targets with all local programs to serve only the restricted set of permissible individuals.

Second, we believe the allowable period for education and training should be extended beyond the four months on a case-by-case basis allowed in the budget reconciliation bill. As with all participants in adult education, there is a wide range in skills and individuals vary in the time they need to achieve the educational skills required to participate in training and obtain and retain employment.

To be truly effective, programs must first assess program participants to determine what educational skills would be needed to function successfully in training or employment and how much time would be needed to meet the entrance criteria and provide services accordingly. Individuals, particularly those with low levels of literacy, often require time periods of 6 months to a year before they are able to transition successfully into training or employment.

Although the legislation does allow individuals to participate in education and training activities part-time for up to five years, many individuals with low levels of literacy will require more than the three or four months permitted for full time participation in adult education programs to reach a level of literacy which permits them to obtain a job paying a living wage or to participate in job training programs. Decisions regarding the amount of time individuals can participate in education and training programs full time should be made on a case by case basis, consistent with the abilities of the individual.

We encourage you to support changes to this legislation to address these concerns before a final budget reconciliation bill is approved by Congress and forwarded to the President.

Should you have any questions, please contact Lynn Selmsler, Public Policy Director for the National Coalition for Literacy, lcselmsler@cox.net or Noreen Lopez, Public Policy Committee Chairperson, lopezns@comcast.net or 703-824-9395.

Sincerely,



Dale Lipschultz
President, National Coalition for Literacy