



September 10, 2025

To Whom it May Concern:

I'm reaching out today with an urgent message – protect federal adult education funding in the FY26 Appropriations bill.

Federal adult education funding is vital to Missouri's adult learners, local employers, and communities. Adult Education programs help equip adult learners with literacy, numeracy, digital literacy, and workforce readiness skills so they can get their high school equivalency and other credentials needed for our local workforce. Adult Education programs specialize in teaching foundational skills which must be acquired to successfully complete job training programs. Foundational skills improvement in combination with workforce skills training helps build better futures for learners, their families, and communities by breaking the cycle of generational illiteracy and poverty and reducing recidivism. More highly educated adults also experience higher employment and home ownership rates, higher annual earnings, lower levels of incarceration and decreased dependence on social support programs. In turn, local employers gain access to a pool of skilled workers to fill in-demand jobs, thereby strengthening our economy.

Educating more adults in Missouri is not just about improving individual lives. Helping more adults complete their high school education also improves our state's ability to compete in the global job market. There are more than 400,000 adults in Missouri who did not graduate high school. These are 400,000 individuals that are more likely to be enrolled in social service programs. They can be educated and trained for in-demand jobs. By 2030, more than 65 percent of all jobs will require some level of postsecondary education. These individuals need to complete their high school education first. Investing in adult education is investing in economic growth and a growing middle class.

While **less than 5%** of students entering Missouri adult education programs begin classes ready to take a high school equivalency test, **over 20%** achieve their goal in the same year they begin. More than 64% have documented improvement in their foundational skills level. Missouri adult education programs also incorporate technical training into their programs. They have partnered with community colleges and local businesses to provide training for certified nurse assistants, paraprofessional educators, certified logistics associates, forklift drivers, substitute teachers, construction workers, and much more. Adults in these programs are being given an opportunity to enter a career pathway.

Adult education is a critical component of a strong workforce development system. In order to ensure that we can continue to meet the needs of employers and individuals, it is vital that you protect funding for adult education in FY 2026. Please work to ensure this funding is restored and maintained as the FY26 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill is considered by the Appropriations Committee and then by the full House of Representatives.

Thank you for your consideration of my urgent request and I hope I can count on your support and action on behalf of adult learners and local employers.

Donna Brake
President, Missouri Association for Workforce Development

OUR MISSION:

To reach and connect the workforce development community through education, training and networking.

OUR VISION:

To cultivate a collaborative and integrated environment for workforce development.