

Adult Basic Education (ABE) is a crucial economic driver in Minnesota. The current dynamic of strong job growth, combined with the growing number of retirements, prevent many essential jobs from being filled.

The foundational skills of reading, writing and basic math, English language, and job training provided through ABE are major resources that help address employer needs, sustain economic growth, and provide employees access to living wage jobs, leading to social and economic advancement.

Unlike K-12, which is funded on a per pupil basis, ABE receives a set sum each year - regardless of the number of adult learners served. Currently, ABE is being forced to scale back, leading to increasing waitlists and fewer classes throughout the state. To address these challenges, and support the success of programs throughout the state, the Literacy Action Network advocates for increased funding to the base funding.

\$10 MILLION INCREASE IN ADULT EDUCATION BASE FUNDING TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO SERVICES STATEWIDE AND ELIMINATE WAITING LISTS FOR CLASSES.
THERE HAS BEEN A 16% GROWTH IN HOURS SERVICE ACROSS THE STATE AND PROGRAM COST INCREASES HAVE INCREASED MORE THAN 20% IN MANY PROGRAMS.

- The gross revenue per contact hour cap, currently \$30 per hour, would raise to \$36 per hour, and
- The cap on growth in contact hour revenue, currently the greater of 11% or \$10,000, would be suspended for the funding year 2025-2026. For future years the cap would be raised to the greater of 11% or \$12,000.

Our dedicated ABE teachers are critical to the programs we offer and account for 90% of ABE operation costs; since there are no other places to cut costs, instructional hours shrink.

LAN also supports:

BASE FUNDING OF UP TO \$250,000/YEAR FOR THE HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY (HSE/GED) ONE-FREE TEST FUNDING:

Funding is currently at \$490,000 for 3 years. To date, students have used more than \$200,000 in the first year. Support for these tests is vital for enabling Minnesotans to pursue employment opportunities, career advancements, and higher education.

Challenges Facing Adult Education Programs

- Fewer adult learners served in a timely manner, leaving many potential workers unemployed or underemployed, unable to meet essential, in-demand employer needs.
- Employers facing continued challenges filling jobs, decreasing economic growth.
- Reduced ability to upskill employees
- Constrained capacity to partner with employers, DEED, post-secondary programs. Lack of adequate HSE/GED testing support in Greater Minnesota
- Significant program growth and costs
- Shrinking instructional hours due to funding constraints and staffing concerns

BENEFITS OF ADULT BASIC EDUCATION

Adult Education (ABE) teaches over 60,000 learners English, foundational literacy, math, and digital skills, preparation for post-secondary education or employment, and more. When adult learners enter our classrooms they bring their life experiences, attitudes about learning, motivations and fears. They are voluntary learners, seeking new information or opportunities and are motivated to learn. Often they are looking for career advancement or to gain additional skills in their current jobs.

Adults with low literacy often have limited potential in securing self-sustaining employment, they can have difficulties filling out a job application and difficulty helping their child with homework.

ABE provides a continuum of services to adults who seek to empower themselves. Many programs offer career pathways in medical, hospitality, and trade jobs in addition to college readiness.

ABE meets adult learners at their level and supports their learning to help them succeed. Investing in adult education supports whole family and community well-being.

A statewide survey found:

- **Significant waitlists for enrollment in classes.** Statewide program hours grew last year by 16% with some programs growing significantly more.
- **Fewer adult learners served in a timely manner,** leaving potential workers unemployed or underemployed, unable to meet essential, in-demand employer needs.
- **Ongoing funding constraints reduced capacity for ABE to partner** with employers, DEED, local workforce, and post-secondary programs
- **Employers are struggling to fill jobs with qualified candidates,** inhibiting economic growth and self-sufficiency.
- **Support needed for HSE/GED testing in Greater MN.** Given the scarcity of testing sites and the challenges posed by internet instability for remote testing in rural MN, funding is essential to help establish additional testing sites and mobile testing centers.
- **Long distance learning services and equipment needs such as computers, etc. are not being met.** The original ABE formula was developed prior to the development of internet classes.

For more information contact:

Scott Helland, Legislative Co-Chair, shelland@isd622.org, (651) 784-6202
Susan Evans, Legislative Co-Chair, sevans1@sowashco.org, (651) 270-3266
Sherry Munyon, Lobbyist, smunyon@capitolaccess.us, (612) 723-4245