



July 24, 2014

On behalf of the Commission on Adult Basic Education (COABE) and its 13,000+ members from across the country, I am writing in support of Secretary of Education's Supplemental Priorities and Definitions for Discretionary Grants – Specifically Proposed Priority #6 –Improving Job-Driven Training and Employment Outcomes as a priority for discretionary grants. COABE is comprised of adult education practitioners and administrators. Our purpose is to advance adult education and literacy opportunities for all persons.

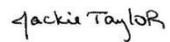
Adult education practitioners have a history of responding to adult learner needs. This response has always been founded in the belief that a system which provides relevant educational opportunities of quality support for students and educators promotes success. I am pleased with the Secretary's emphasis on integrating education and training into a career pathway system. A system such as this requires new skills, knowledge and credentials for both low skilled adults and the professionals who help them secure industry relevant certification and obtain employment in an area with the potential to advance.

Along with COABE's 13,000+ members, I am pleased to see an emphasis in this priority for the provision of support services that will assist our adults achieve the goals as presented. I would encourage the Secretary to also include a continued support of the "Ability to Benefit", continued and expanded research in the adult education and literacy field and an in depth review of the low funding levels of the adult education delivery system. These are essential if we are to be successful in assisting low skilled adults achieve the goals of WIOA. Further support for emphasis on these areas is evident in the recent Survey of Adult Skills (PIACC) which indicated that 16 million adults in the U. S. are low skilled and could benefit from adult basic education services, but the system is only able to serve just fewer than 2 million. This is a staggering demonstration the serious need for adult education and literacy services provided by well trained professionals.

The desired outcomes in a career pathways model cannot be attained without a focus on the funding levels and priorities for adult education and literacy. The support services necessary for low skilled adults to achieve success in this model are many. These must be provided in a comprehensive, collaborative, integrated and proficient manner by trained professionals. An improved workplace and employment opportunities for adult education practitioners and administrators is essential to ensure success as we move forward with the new career pathways model. Currently the field is composed of approximately 90% part time professionals due to low funding levels. Close collaboration with workforce development stakeholders to provide effective services while creating the desired models of integration with workforce preparation activities and training requires a full time emphasis for adult education practitioners and programs which are already underfunded.

The membership of COABE and I look forward to working in partnership with the Secretary of Education, the Office of Career Technical and Adult Education and others to ensure effective implementation of WIOA and the priorities of these discretionary grants. If you have any questions or there is a further way COABE can be of assistance with the priorities or implementation, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jackie Taylor". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Jackie Taylor
President 2013-2015
Commission on Adult Basic Education