

Adult Literacy Crucial For Massachusetts' Economic Growth Hundreds To Rally At State House To Preserve Funding

(Boston, MA) Nearly one of every six adults in Massachusetts has less than a high school diploma, limited English skills or both, hindering their ability to compete in our state's rapidly changing economy or support their own child's educational advancement.

On Thursday, March 12 at 11 AM hundreds of adult learners and adult literacy practitioners from across the state will assemble in the Gardner Auditorium in the State House for Adult Literacy Awareness Day.

This annual event, organized by the Massachusetts Alliance for Adult Literacy (MassAAL) and adult learners, draws participants in GED, Adult Basic Education (ABE), and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes to tell their stories and urge their local representatives to continue support for these programs. In 2008, more than 1000 attended.

Adult education creates a pathway to success leading people to better jobs, higher education and civic participation. Currently there is a far greater demand for programs than slots available.

"In this economic climate, when basic math and literacy skills are critical, we need at least level funding for adult education," notes MassAAL director Ernest Best. A former adult learner himself, Best chose a GED over life on the streets and went on to attend UMass-Boston and MIT.

"Change in the economy will depend on an educated work force," adds State Representative Jeffery Sánchez. "It is therefore important for us to recognize the key role adult education plays in our economy, and for individuals in providing true economic independence."

State Commissioner Eddie Jenkins, a former GED instructor and NFL player, will deliver the keynote. "Adult literacy can improve the lives of the Commonwealth's citizens and the nation's, because it offers a realistic vehicle to reach the American dream."

The Adult Literacy Awareness Day is sponsored by the Boston Foundation and the Hyams Foundation and endorsed by Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Education (MCAE); English for New Bostonians (ENB); First Literacy, Inc. (formerly the Boston Adult Literacy Fund); Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA); and Massachusetts Workforce Alliance (MWA).

About MassAAL

The Massachusetts Alliance for Adult Literacy (MassAAL) is the voice for the adult learner in Adult Basic Education (ABE), English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and GED

programs in Massachusetts. MassAAL assists the adult learner in developing lifelong leadership skills, creates public awareness about the need for adult literacy, and strengthens the adult learner's voice in shaping public policy for adult literacy services in Massachusetts. For more information on MassAAL, visit <http://www.sabes.org/student/massaal.htm>