

Testimony Presented to the
House Appropriations Committee on K-12, School Aid and Education

Section 107 Adult Education Funding

Oogie LaMar, Director of Adult Education

April 10, 2019

My name is Oogie LaMar, I am the Director of Adult Education for the Kent ISD. Our program provides Adult Education and Literacy services for over 1000 adult learners in Kent County. As a part of Region 4, the Adult Learning Providers of West Michigan (ALPWM), we provide adult education, job training and literacy services for adults in 13 counties where nearly 1.6 Michiganders reside. As one of the nineteen regional recipients of Section 107 funding, I would like to thank this committee, especially Chairman, Representative Aaron Miller for the giving me this opportunity to speak today. I would also like to thank this committee for the support that has been given to adult education programs and regional CTE programs in the past.

Over the last nine-years, I have had the pleasure of working with some of the most dedicated and compassionate people who provide education, literacy and job-training programs for adults in Kent County and throughout the State of Michigan. These agencies include the Adult Learning Providers of West Michigan, MACAE (Michigan Association of Community and Adult Education) - workforce training partners Grand Rapids Community College, Kent Career Technical Center, local Michigan Works agencies and others to coordinate services for the adults in our community. As a program provider, I am familiar with the barriers that our students have, and I get to see them become successful members of our community once they have completed our programs. Unlike the traditional learner, adults enroll in our program to not only change their lives, but often to provide better opportunities for them and their families.

I would like to share with this committee one of the successful programs that we have created utilizing workforce partners Kenona Industries and Michigan Turkey Producers to established work based literacy programs. The Kent ISD is currently providing services to 58 adult learners who require English Language services to improve production at Kenona Industries and Michigan Turkey Producers. In this partnership, employees attend English Language classes at their place of employment and are developing the skills needed to advance within their careers. In addition, employers are able to increase production with these skilled employees. Former Representative Chris Afendoulis is the currently the CEO at Kenona and he supports these efforts and I believe with additional funding the Kent ISD and other programs will be able to expand this and other opportunities for adult learners and businesses in this great state.

I ask for this committee to consider increasing adult education funding by \$5 million dollars to create other opportunities like this and other for Michigan residents.

•Last year, over 19,000 adults in Michigan received services from adult education programs like Kent ISD – this is less than 3% of adults in the state without a HS diploma.

•There are several communities in Michigan that do NOT have access to adult education – outreach services that could be provided with additional funding to support them. In 2015 there were 129 Section 107 providers in Michigan today number of providers are down to around 100 programs. We believe that this decrease in service providers is due to the increased cost of providing services to our most vulnerable adults in Michigan. I would hope that this Committee supports adult learners, their families (25% of the adults enrolled in my program have elementary aged children) and the local business who are in need of a skilled workforce.

•Invest now to enhance the quality of life of adults and the MI employer talent pool or invest later to MI welfare and assistance programs. Adult education is a gateway to a job and a career. It is a hand up, not a hand out. Its impact can last for generations. Properly funding the adult education system would yield substantial fiscal and social benefits, adding to GDP growth, personal incomes, increased revenues, and savings on incarceration and health care.

•An increase of \$260 per adult – this would increase adult education funding from \$30.5 million to \$35.5 million for the 2019-20 program year. This increase will allow program to return to communities that currently don't have services, allow programs to hire staff to support growth in current programs and allow student access to job training programs in their local communities. These efforts will help to jump start Michigan's economy, provide highly skilled adult workers and help prepare Michigan's economic engine.

Lastly, I hope that you share in our belief that adult education students should also have access to programs in all areas of the state. Adult education is a crucial link that prepares these workers for training, credentials and, finally, skilled jobs. With more funding all Michigan residents can be included in some of the state's current initiatives, adult education will reach more students and can facilitate student success by expanding access to the nearly 900,000 adult learners who need our help.



MICHIGAN ADULT EDUCATION

Adult Education

Michigan's Adult Education Programs serve the needs of individuals, employers, and a changing economy by raising adult levels of academic and occupational skills proficiency, so that participants are prepared to acquire life-sustaining employment.

"I am prepared for the future. Prepared for the workplace"

- Michigan Adult Education Student



Where is the need?

What are the challenges?

Basic Skills Gap

1 in 10 Michiganders over age 18 do not have a high school diploma

Over **one million** Michiganders have no college education, are working, but living with a combined income less than a living wage.

Generational Education Loss

Children whose mothers have less than a high school diploma are **14%** more likely to be retained in school

1 in 5 kids in Michigan live in poverty

Employment Shortages

45% of participants wanting Michigan Adult Education help are **low income, long term unemployed or receiving public assistance**

811, 000 career openings in Michigan through 2024

37% of Michigan jobs (by 2020) will require some sort of vocational credential or associate degree

What is the solution? How do we get there?

Michigan Adult Education provides a return on investment in a variety of ways,

by ensuring that program participants are taught, trained and tooled

for success in the 21st century.

Taught, Trained, and Tooled in Michigan means:

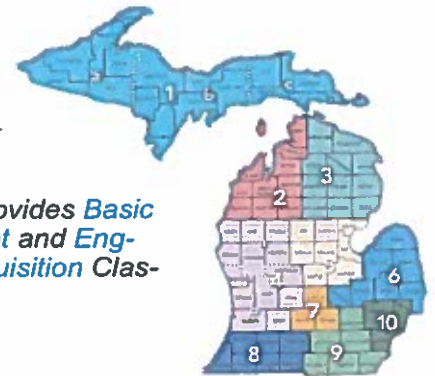
Bridging the Skills Gap

-Working with local and regional employers to identify high-need, in-demand sector jobs

10 Prosperity Regions for programming

In 2017-18, nearly **31,000 adults** were taught, trained and tooled in Michigan.

Adult Education provides **Basic Skills Enhancement and English Language Acquisition Classes**



-Reaching out to workforce and business partners

Increasing Employment

-Responding to employer needs by creating pipelines for talent to enter the workforce and fill jobs

Adult Education Providers engage with workforce development partners regionally

Working age adults, ages 24-44, comprise half of Michigan adult education participants

Adult Education provides **Soft skills/Employability skills instruction, Occupational/Workforce Preparation/Credentialing**

Preparing for Higher Education, Training and Credentialing

-Supporting strong academic and vocational education and training programs that lead to higher education and employment.

96 Michigan programs offer **Integrated Education and Training**

Adult Education provides **High School Equivalency and Completion, College and Postsecondary Preparation, Integrated Education and Training programs**

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Building Resilient Communities

Creating strong community bonds that will spark a stronger Michigan and a stronger nation.

Over **18,000** program participants have children

32,400 children have parents enrolled in programs

Adult Education provides **Family and Literacy Parenting Instruction, Integrated English Literacy/Civics Education**

Sebasaza Gatanazi

Kent ISD – Beckwith Adult Education

2018-2019 Student Ambassador

Hello, my name is Sebasaza Gatanazi and I was born in the Congo DRC. When I was 11 my family left the country because of the war. Of the 9 children in my family, my 2 older brothers were shot and killed on the same day before we made it out of the Congo. My family and I spent 20 years in the Gihembe refugee camp in Byumba, Rwanda. The camp was a very hard life. There were no schools, so I had no access to an education for 20 years. We struggled to feed ourselves in Gihembe. There were people who came to help with food and medicine, but with 20,000 refugees living there it was still very hard. When I was 17 years old my father died and I became responsible for my whole family.

In 2008, American churches started coming to the Gihembe to start helping refugee families come to the United States. My family was very lucky to be chosen to come to the United States in 2014. We were given a travel loan for airline tickets to arrive but once we started working we had to pay that loan back. I found a job and finished paying back the loan in 2018. My repayment of my travel loan will help another refugee family be able to come to the United States.

When I came here, I spoke no English. I found Beckwith Adult Education because my brother-in-law was a student there. I am now in the highest level of ESL and plan to continue on to get my GED through Beckwith. After my GED I want to go on to college so I can provide a good life for my son and family. I am passionate about music and would like to pursue an education in music production. I want to help people express themselves with music.

I know that I have faced obstacles in my life, but in adult education you have thousands of students who have also faced challenges and have accomplished their goals. Seeing the successes of my classmates gives me hope that I can accomplish my goals too.