



State Legislators and Local Leaders Meet to Discuss Adult Literacy

By Alex Vuocolo | September 17, 2013

On Wednesday, September 11, a public hearing was held at Peirce College that focused on adult literacy and workforce development in Pennsylvania. Members of the Mayor's Commission on Literacy and 16 state legislators heard testimony from leaders of adult literacy organizations.

The hearing was co-hosted by Pennsylvania House Democratic Policy Committee Chairman Mike Sturla and Philadelphia State Representatives Cherelle Parker, Brian Sims, Michelle Brownlee, and Stephen Kinsey.

Kim Rossman, president of the Pennsylvania Association for Adult Continuing Education and executive director of Tutors of Literacy in the Commonwealth, pointed out how one million Pennsylvania adults over 25 lack a high school diploma and that literacy programs help these adults meet the needs of the economy. Rossman added that literacy programs have been cut 50 percent over the last seven years, despite increased demand.



Representatives of Community Women's Education Project and the Community College of Philadelphia also spoke at the hearing, sharing their experience with young adults seeking employment who are not sufficiently literate.

"Hundreds of thousands of Pennsylvanians want to work, but many can't qualify for training to move into high-demand industries where jobs are going unfilled," said Dr. Judith Gay, interim president of the Community College of Philadelphia.

Judith Rényi, executive director of The Commission, concluded the hearing with a recap of policy recommendations that were addressed by different participants:

- ensure Pennsylvania participates in the next national adult literacy study so the commonwealth has accurate data on its citizens
- create an educators' certification that infuses workforce literacy standards when educating adults
- put funding for adult education back into community college budget so community colleges aren't competing with countless other agencies for funding
- write legislation that supports dual enrollment programs that allow high school students and those on a path to GED® attainment earn college credits
- extend state grants to learners in adult education courses
- support bridge programs for learners who are long out of school

modify state requirements for clients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) that include adult education as a core activity for continued benefits.

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