

1 February 2016

The Honorable Don Beyer
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20151

Dear Representative Beyer:

As Executive Director of TESOL International Association, I am writing in support of the Save Teachers of Adults from Paying out of their Livelihood for Education Resources (STAPLER) Act. This important legislation will help support educators working with in one of the most critical yet underfunded sectors of the U.S. education system – adult education.

Although adult education programs provide a wide variety of services for adult learners, such as literacy services and high school equivalency programs, the largest population of students in adult education programs participate in English as a second language (ESL) classes. According to data collected by the National Reporting System at the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) at the U.S. Department of Education, approximately 40% of learners participating in publicly funded adult education programs are English language learners. In fact, adult education programs serve as the de facto integration system for the United States, providing ESL and civics classes for those wishing to become naturalized citizens.

Despite serving a critical need, adult education programs are typically under-funded, with the majority of states reporting waiting lists for enrollment in publicly-funded programs. Federal funding has not changed significantly in over a decade. As a result, many adult education providers have limited resources to develop many aspects of their programs. Teachers in public K-12 programs have been able to receive tax benefits for out-of-pocket expenses for years, however this same opportunity has not been provided to teachers in adult education. While more resources and funding are needed to adequately support adult education, the STAPLER Act is a step in the right direction, and thus provides an important benefit to help support teachers working in adult ESL instruction.

Thank you for your leadership and support on this issue. TESOL International Association welcomes the opportunity to be a resource for you and your staff, and looks forward to working on helping to pass this important legislation.

Sincerely,



Rosa Aronson, PhD, CAE
Executive Director