



February 24, 2006

Hon. Ulysses Currie
Senate of Maryland
Miller Senate Office Building, 3 West Wing
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: SB 650 FUNDING FORMULA FOR ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY GRANTS

Dear Chairman Currie:

On behalf of the over 350 members of Maryland Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), I am writing to express our support for increased state investment in Adult Education services in Maryland. Legislation before the General Assembly in the 2006 legislative session will call upon the State to increase its investment in Adult Education to \$26.5 million over the next five years. This legislation is especially significant to Maryland TESOL as 40% of Adult Education students in our state are English language learners.

The demand for Adult Education in Maryland significantly exceeds current capacity. Research Triangle Institute has identified 133,216 adults in Maryland with English as a second language needs; currently only 20,000 adult English language learners are served through state and federally funded programs in Maryland. Of these 20,000 learners, 49% are at the beginning proficiency level. Of the nearly 5,000 learners on program waiting lists in the state, 47% are English language learners. Inadequate English language services prevent adults from accessing classes they need to get a job or to pursue further education and training.

Additionally, research confirms the close link between the literacy level of parents and the academic success of their children. Adults who have had the opportunity to be educated pass on high expectations to their children. This is significant because students enrolled in Maryland Adult Education programs are parents to 20,000 school-age children. Educated adults are prepared to support their school-age children by encouraging a high level of achievement, avoiding school dropouts, and accessing better health care and economic security.

The Superintendent's Panel on Excellence in Adult Education, which includes representatives of business, labor, and educational institutions, has recommended the establishment of a funding formula designed to expand Maryland's investment in Adult Education. This will carry benefits for adult learners, employers, education providers, and working families across the state.

I hope you will support legislation to establish this funding formula, and the \$26.5 million investment in State support for Adult Education it represents.

Thank you,

Becki Maurio
President, Maryland TESOL