

Testimony 2/9/22

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Good afternoon. My name is Chris Hardy. I'm a resident of Irasburg and I am the Director of Adult Education & Literacy for Northeast Kingdom Learning Services. I am here today to ask you to please support the statewide Adult Education and Literacy provider network with an additional appropriation of \$1.4million in FY23 to address both historic underfunding and ongoing expenses related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Adult Education and Literacy providers serve adults in Vermont who need help with basic skills in order to access other educational or career opportunities.

Adult Education and Literacy providers offer a broad range of services that are targeted, tailored and relevant to each student's goals and needs.

For example; NEKLS had a student who came to us after leaving school due to bullying issues. This student was so shy and quiet that when she started she hardly spoke to staff. However, she had a dream of opening her own taxidermy shop, so her High School Completion plan contextualized her learning; from small business management to job shadowing, everything in her plan was in support of her reaching her goals. When she graduated, the student had come out of her shell and was a vibrant young lady who even chose to walk with her class. She now owns and operates her own successful taxidermy shop here in Vermont. It is for students like this that the AEL system in Vermont is so vital.

So again, please support the statewide Adult Education and Literacy provider network with an additional appropriation of \$1.4million in FY23 to assist us in this critical work helping Vermonters improve their lives.

Thank you for listening.