

Carol Shults-Perkins – Berlin, VT. 05602

Executive Director, Central Vermont Adult Basic Education, Inc.

January 10, 2022 - Advocate Hearing

I'm Carol Shults-Perkins, from Berlin and the Executive Director of Central Vermont Adult Basic Education. We serve Washington, Orange and Lamoille counties and are one of the four statewide non-profit organizations in the Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) network.

I'm here to ask you to support our network's request for an additional appropriation of \$350,000 for Fiscal Year 2022 to address the budget deficits we are facing because of COVID.

Our network serves Vermont's most vulnerable adults and teens who need help with basic skills and obtaining a high school credential in order to be ready to access other education and career opportunities. Despite our requests, our network has not received *any* additional funding from the state during the pandemic.

When those we serve, increase their skills in reading, speaking, writing, math and computer literacy - *greater opportunities are opened up* including: acquisition of employment skills, obtaining a job, gaining career advancement, accessing further education, and better quality of life.

Martha, one of our students enrolled in our program as a single mother from Honduras with a sixth grade education. While enrolled she learned to speak English, improved her literacy, attained Citizenship, and at age 39 obtained a high school diploma and the career specific skills she needed to accomplish her dream of owning her own hair salon. Martha has a successful business in central Vermont. There are thousands of Vermonters who need our services every year in order to improve their lives.

Please provide an additional \$350,000 for Fiscal Year 2022 to *stabilize our programs, and ensure that all Vermonters have access to the education services needed to live more successful lives and to thrive in our communities.*

Thank you for your time this afternoon.