

FISCAL YEAR 2023 BUDGET PUBLIC HEARINGS TESTIMONY

Matthew Bentley
Program Manager
The Tutorial Center

Hello. My name is Matthew Bentley. I am the Program Manager for The Tutorial Center in Bennington, VT. As an adult education and literacy provider that serves adults in Vermont who need help with basic skills in order to access other educational or career opportunities, I ask that you please support the statewide Adult Education and Literacy provider network with an additional appropriation of \$1.4million in FY2023 to address both historic underfunding and ongoing expenses related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We know that increasing literacy will open up opportunities for students, including better jobs, furthering their education or developing new job skills, having a better family life, and being able to do basic tasks for themselves. A basic education is one of the greatest indicators for not only success in an individual, but also our communities as a whole. As Robert Ingersoll once said "We rise by lifting others." And we have tens of thousands of Vermonters, without a diploma and more with poor literacy in reading, writing and math, that need our services to rise to their potential.

The reason that The Tutorial Center is making this request, and joining our voice to our Adult Education and Literacy provider network partners, is because of the lost revenue due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the increased cost of providing our services in these challenging times. We have seen our agencies change lives and we wish to continue to do so. We had a gentleman that lived in a cave and had a criminal record that earned his diploma in his 40's. He credits his education to getting him to achieve his goals. He now works for the town of Bennington and is the Captain of the Bennington Fire Department. We need your support to provide us the opportunity to continue to change lives and communities.

Please support the statewide Adult Education and Literacy provider network with an additional appropriation of \$1.4million in FY2023 to address both historic underfunding and ongoing expenses related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you for your time, and listening.