

AELN BAA Request

- My name is Karen Harker, I live in the town of Sharon, and I am the regional director of Vermont Adult Learning, Windsor County. I am here today representing the Adult Education and Literacy Network.
- We are asking for **an increase of \$500,000 in base funding to fill the gap from your original budget request and actual budget appropriation last session. Last year we asked for \$1.5 million dollars and received \$1 million dollars. The \$500,000 increase would help to fill the gap in last year's funding.**
- From helping our students earn high school diplomas, to helping them learn English, the Adult Education and Literacy Network changes people's lives and helps them to build individual successes. It also prepares Vermonters for good paying jobs. Our services are vital to the further development of Vermont's workforce, and our broad range of services are targeted and tailored to each student's needs. It is a beautiful thing to watch students grow and develop within our programs.
- One such example that comes to mind is a recent student who we helped to achieve her GED in Windsor County. This student not only grew within our program – moving from our lowest math level to our highest – but by getting her GED, is now able to move up within her workplace into a management position. She even has thought of continuing her education at CCV and pursuing a career in phlebotomy, none of which she would have been inspired to do without our program. This 40-year-old Vermonter is now empowered to do things she once never thought possible, but without funding, we won't be able to continue to provide services to people like her.
- In fact, we are already facing serious challenges due to our budget, and my centers in White River Junction and Springfield now have waiting lists because we are unable to keep up with demand for our services with our current staff. Vermont's traditional schools are not serving students well, particularly since COVID, and Adult Education programs have become the safety net to catch students for whom traditional school is not workable. In comparison to other Vermont high schools, we serve a higher percentage of BIPOC students, students with disabilities, and low income students. It is this demographic that we are asking you to support with this budget adjustment. Without an increase in our base funding, we will be forced to cut off vital services to high needs Vermonters across the state..
- **Please provide an increase of \$500,000 in base funding to fill the gap from your original budget request and actual budget appropriation last session.**