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Failure to Assist Limited English Speakers Likely to Hurt U.S. Productivity *Report Finds that More Language and Job Training Services Are Needed*

(Washington, DC) — Our country is not doing enough to help employers integrate immigrants into the workforce despite projections that immigrants—many of whom have limited English skills—will account for *all* of the net growth in the 25- to 54-year-old workforce over the next two decades. According to the 2000 Census, eight million working-age adults—5 percent of all adults—do not speak English well or at all. Yet current English language and job training services meet only a small fraction of the need. A new report from the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), released in time for Labor Day, discusses how states and localities can train this growing and crucial part of the workforce and suggests changes to federal policy that will help this population and, consequently, the U.S. economy.

The report, *The Language of Opportunity: Expanding Employment for Adults with Limited English Skills* by Heide Spruck Wrigley, Elise Richer, Karin Martinson, Hitomi Kubo, and Julie Strawn, finds that current resources for language and job training services are dwarfed by the need. In addition, few programs focus on providing the nexus of language, cultural, and specific job skills that is key to helping low-income adults with limited English skills increase their wages—and to helping our nation’s economy grow.

“Even states not known as destinations for immigrants are seeing substantial increases in immigrant populations,” said Elise Richer, an author of the report and Senior Policy Analyst at CLASP. “We ignore this population to the detriment of our nation’s growth and prosperity.”

The appendix of the report highlights programs in seven states (California, Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin) that are providing a combination of language skills and job training to limited English adults. These programs are on the forefront of meeting immigrant worker language and training needs. Their success helped shape the recommendations for program design and public policy in the report.

These recommendations include: creating programs that combine language services with job skills training; adapting existing education and training programs to the needs of limited English speakers; providing bilingual career advising services; and altering federal and state job training, education, and low-income programs to better serve immigrant populations.

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To read the new CLASP report or 8-page policy brief, both titled *The Language of Opportunity: Expanding Employment for Adults with Limited English Skills*, visit: www.clasp.org/Pubs/Pubs_New. To set up an interview with one of the authors, contact Gayle Bennett at (202) 906-8024.

A national, nonprofit organization founded in 1968, CLASP conducts research, policy analysis, technical assistance, and advocacy on issues related to economic security of low-income families with children.