



**Testimony to the Committee on Education on the FY14 Budget for the Office of the State Superintendent of Education**

**Submitted by Marcie Foster, Policy Analyst, Center for Law and Social Policy**

**April 22, 2013**

My name is Marcie Foster and I am a Policy Analyst at the Center for Law and Social Policy, a national nonprofit in D.C. that develops and advocates for policies that improve the lives of low-income people. I am also a board member of the National Coalition for Literacy, a coalition of 35 foremost national adult education organizations.

At CLASP, I have the privilege of working with states, communities, and schools that are trying to find new ways to deliver adult education to meet the changing skill needs of today's workers. I'm speaking today as a voice for the adult education schools and organizations throughout the District of Columbia that work to educate and improve the economic prospects of nearly 7,000 D.C. residents every year.

In 2013, it is a complete misnomer to label adult education as simply a "literacy" program. It is so much more. Adult education is an oft-overlooked and integral part of the District's workforce development system. Gone are the days when one could attain self-sufficiency with only a high school diploma. Today's workers need higher level skills and often postsecondary-level credentials to compete for jobs in the changing economy. In fact, by 2018, 71 percent of all jobs in D.C. will require some postsecondary training beyond high school. Yet far too many workers in the city are falling far short of these credential requirements and will be left behind. More than 64,000 thousand adults in the District have low basic skills and need additional education or training to become competitive in today's labor market.

Despite the critical role of adult education in workforce development efforts, only a fraction of those who need services—about 1 out of 10—are able to access them. Federal funding for adult education is declining rapidly—facing a nearly 20 percent decrease in funding since 2002. Other federal programs that provide training and assistance to these adults have been slashed equally or

greater. In the last three years alone—since 2010, federal funding for workforce programs has declined by nearly 20 percent.

I'm here today to strongly support OSSE's proposed *Pathways to Adult Literacy Fund*, which will help 1,000 D.C. residents obtain a high school equivalency or postsecondary credential to improve their economic mobility and become vibrant, contributing, tax-paying members of society.

A 2012 pilot of a project that would be funded under the *Pathways to Adult Literacy Fund* showed remarkable progress well above the average national outcomes found in adult education. For example, nearly 77 percent of students in the GED program earned their GED, compared to only 60 percent of students nationally. On this metric alone, D.C. outpaced the national average by nearly 20 percentage points. These programs could not exist without the District's additional funding for adult education.

This proposed fund is a perfect example of the best practices I'm seeing all across the country. States and communities are increasingly developing partnerships between workforce development, community colleges, community-based organizations, and employers who all share a common goal to provide high-quality education and training to low-skilled adults that leads to greater economic prosperity. The *Pathways* fund represents a strong step for the District toward this national vision of economic self-sufficiency for all workers—at all educational levels.

Thank you for your time.