Who We Are:

NAFTAE is a national advocacy organization dedicated exclusively to advancing public policy, elevating the voices of adult learners and educators, and transforming adult education across the United States. Professionals in our field provide numeracy, literacy, English language skills, digital and AI literacy, work readiness, soft skills, high school equivalency and numerous wraparound services to more than one million adult learners nationwide. With more than 2,300 WIOA Title II adult education programs across the country, NAFTAE champions the educators, leaders, and partners working tirelessly to help adults build the literacy, workforce, digital, AI, and life skills they need to succeed in today's economy and create better futures for themselves, their families, and their communities.

Funding Request:

Invest $810 million in the Adult Education State Grants program in Fiscal Year (FY) 2027.

The need for adult education has grown more acute in recent years as the skills gap has widened. Findings by the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) indicate that low performance in literacy increased from 19 to 28 percent and numeracy from 29 to 34 percent of U.S. adults between 2017 and 2023.

Without the opportunities provided through adult education programs, many adults will remain sidelined from the economy as they struggle to find jobs that provide family-sustaining wages, and employers will continue to face workforce shortages.

The cost of illiteracy in the U.S. is approximately $300.8 billion per year, stemming from lost earnings, lower productivity, less innovation, increased need for government assistance, and more.

At current funding levels, adult education programs, many of which have waiting lists, can only reach approximately 1.3 million people.

Additional funding is needed to meet the high demand for adult education, enable programs to invest in technology to best serve their students – in-person, online, or in hybrid settings – and provide professional development and other program enhancements.

Now is the time to build the capacity of adult education programs, and in doing so, help employers fill in-demand jobs, strengthen our overall economy, and open doors to opportunities for millions of adults. **Please support $810 million for the Adult Education State Grants program in the FY27 appropriations process.**

Policy Request:

Cosponsor the Adult Education WORKS Act, the COABE-supported bipartisan bill led by Senators Reed (D-RI) and Todd Young (R-IN) in the Senate (S.1400) and Representative McBath (D-GA) in the House (H.R.2789)

The bipartisan Adult Education WORKS Act would update and strengthen adult education programs authorized under Title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), including by:

- enhancing coordination within the WIOA system;
- increasing the percentage of funding devoted to professional development;
- expanding professionalization opportunities for adult educators;
- promoting greater utilization of contextualized and concurrent integrated education and training (IET);
- emphasizing the development of digital and information literacy skills that are in high demand by employers and necessary to navigate everyday life; and
- allowing states to pilot accountability systems to better assess performance by adult learners and programs.

This legislation addresses gaps in the WIOA system in order to expand opportunities for adult learners and their families, support employers in finding skilled workers to fill open jobs, boost our economy, and increase our nation's global competitiveness.

Last Congress, A Stronger Workforce for America Act (ASWA), the WIOA reauthorization bill that nearly became law, included several of these provisions.

We urge Congress to again pursue a bipartisan WIOA reauthorization process that maintains the integrity of adult education while strengthening our programs as per the Adult Education WORKS Act.

Please cosponsor the bipartisan Adult Education WORKS Act and support its inclusion in any moving WIOA reauthorization bill.