

No. 1986-143

AN ACT

HB 2038

Expanding the available adult basic education programs and the duties of the Department of Education; making an appropriation; and making a partial repeal.

The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania hereby enacts as follows:

Section 1. Short title.

This act shall be known and may be cited as the Adult Literacy Act.

Section 2. Findings and purpose.

(a) Findings.—The General Assembly finds and declares:

(1) The Commonwealth has 2,700,000 adults who have not completed their high school education, which places Pennsylvania fourth in the nation with the greatest number of people without high school diplomas.

(2) Less than 1% of these 2,700,000 adults participate in adult basic education programs.

(3) Approximately 750,000 adult Pennsylvanians are functionally illiterate, lacking skills and knowledge essential to cope with daily demands and without the educational background to participate in occupational training or employment.

(4) If adult basic education needs are not more fully met, the Commonwealth could be forced to increase its support of these individuals through unemployment compensation, welfare payments and correctional institutions. A general decline of Statewide productivity may ensue.

(b) Purpose.—It is the intent of this act to broaden the scope of educational activities to the uneducated and undereducated adults in the Commonwealth, including those who speak other languages, and to provide programs to those individuals who have previously been unserved. By encouraging and expanding the availability of basic education programs to adults in the Commonwealth, it is hoped these adults will be able to function more effectively in their personal lives and as citizens and be better prepared for occupational training in order that they may become more responsible and productive members of society.

Section 3. Definitions.

The following words and phrases when used in this act shall have the meanings given to them in this section unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

“Adult literacy education.” An educational program designed to provide basic skills training in mathematics, reading and English, including English as a secondary language.

“Department.” The Department of Education of the Commonwealth.

“Eligible adult.” A person who meets the following criteria:

- (1) Is at least 17 years of age.
- (2) Is a resident of this Commonwealth.
- (3) Does not hold a high school diploma or its equivalent.
- (4) Is not currently enrolled in a public or private secondary or post-secondary school.

“Local education provider.” An approved educational agency, institution or organization making use of either professional or voluntary personnel, which may be any of the following:

- (1) School districts.
- (2) Intermediate units.
- (3) Area vocational-technical schools.
- (4) Community colleges.
- (5) Literacy councils.
- (6) Local libraries.
- (7) Community-based organizations which are private, nonprofit organizations and are representative of communities or significant parts of communities and which provide adult basic education programs.
- (8) Any other educational entity recognized by the secretary for providing appropriate and effective adult basic education curriculum.

“Secretary.” The Secretary of Education of the Commonwealth.

“Support services.” Those services necessary to enable eligible adults to participate in and benefit from an adult literacy education program, including transportation, child care, counseling and referral services.

Section 4. Grant program.

(a) Establishment.—There is hereby established within the department an adult literacy education grant program. Adult literacy education providers may apply to the department for grants to provide the following services:

- (1) Adult literacy education programs, including salaries, wages, fringe benefits, books and other instructional materials.
- (2) Training for volunteer adult literacy education instructors.
- (3) Administration of adult literacy education programs.
- (4) Support services necessary to enable individuals to participate in and benefit from the program.
- (5) Outreach activities to enroll eligible adults and to recruit volunteer tutors and instructors.

(b) Procedures, rules and forms.—The secretary shall adopt such procedures, rules and forms as may be necessary to implement this grant program. Applications shall be made to the department in such form and at such time as the secretary may prescribe. Funds received under this program may be used in conjunction with funds received from any other public or private source.

(c) Priorities for funding.—The secretary shall consider, but not be limited to, the following factors when evaluating proposals for adult literacy education programs:

- (1) Number of eligible adults expected to be enrolled in classes who are receiving either State or Federal public assistance, or who are unemployed workers or displaced homemakers.

(2) Number of eligible adults in any local area who do not have certificates of graduation from a secondary school and who are not currently enrolled in adult literacy education programs.

(3) Number of eligible adults expected to be enrolled who are members of minority groups.

(4) Number of eligible adults with less than a fifth grade reading level to be served.

(5) The provision of client outreach and referral activities that are coordinated with other adult education and literacy programs, county assistance offices, social service agencies, offices of employment security, Job Training Partnership Act programs and other community groups or agencies that provide services and assistance to persons in need of basic literacy skills.

Section 5. Limitations on funding.

(a) Sectarian activities.—No funds provided by this act shall be used for programs, activities or services related to sectarian instruction or religious worship.

(b) Institutionalized adults.—No more than 20% of the annual appropriation shall be used to provide education to institutionalized adults.

(c) Graduation equivalency programs.—No more than 20% of the annual appropriation shall be used for programs of equivalency for certificate of graduation from a secondary school.

(d) Volunteer education instructors.—At least 20% of the annual appropriation shall be used for training volunteer adult literacy education instructors.

(e) Support services.—No more than 10% of any grant may be used for support services.

(f) Administrative costs.—No more than 10% of a grant may be used for administrative costs incurred by the adult literacy education provider.

Section 6. Audits and records.

The department may audit the records and accounts of an adult literacy education provider relating to a grant award pursuant to this act. The adult literacy education provider shall make the records and accounts available to the department upon its request.

Section 7. Monitoring and reporting.

(a) Report by adult literacy education provider.—Upon completion of the educational program funded, wholly or in part, by a grant awarded under this act, each adult literacy education provider shall report to the department the same information on the State-funded program as is required to be reported by the Adult Education Act (Public Law 89-750, 20 U.S.C. § 1201 et seq.) for federally funded programs and any other information that may be requested by the secretary.

(b) Report by department.—The secretary shall provide an annual report to the General Assembly, no later than January 1 of each year, which describes State-administered adult basic education activities for the prior fiscal year.

Section 8. Appropriation.

The sum of \$2,000,000, or as much thereof as may be necessary, is hereby appropriated to the Department of Education for the fiscal year July 1, 1986, to June 30, 1987, to carry out the purpose of this act. This sum shall be in addition to any currently available State, Federal or other funds for adult basic education.

Section 9. Partial repeal.

Except for the sum of \$5,000,000, the appropriation for job training programs in section 216 of the act of July 1, 1986 (P.L.1776, No.5A), known as the General Appropriation Act of 1986, is repealed.

Section 10. Effective date.

This act shall take effect immediately.

APPROVED—The 22nd day of October, A. D. 1986.

DICK THORNBURGH