

**Testimony for Senate Hearing on Adult Basic Education
Senator Florence Shapiro
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**Provided by
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Texas should consider the potential benefits of strengthening its Adult Basic Education programs through funding, oversight, and integration with postsecondary education.

- A key concept in discussing Adult Basic Education is to first and foremost recognize that it is an education initiative that should lead to both literacy and preparation for the workplace.
- Times have changed. The high school diploma is no longer the terminal accomplishment for students preparing to enter today's job market. Likewise, the General Education Diploma should no longer be seen as the capstone accomplishment for Adult Basic Education.
- Adequate funding of Adult Basic Education is critical. Adult Basic Education programs across the state have served the same number of students (@100,000 per year) since 2000 despite huge increases in demand. Additionally, fund distribution is based on a formula that has not been revisited in many years, resulting in perceived inequities across the state.
- There are existing models of successful Adult Basic Education programs that can be scaled up and implemented across Texas given sufficient resources. One of the key issues is recognition of the adult population being served and the unique needs they have for student support services. Other successful course designs pair literacy training with workforce training and move adult students through the pipeline and into the workforce. Those experienced in working with Adult Basic Education programs are in the best position to provide the practical advice on key decisions related to program development and measures of success for this group of students.

- Texas Community Colleges have a key role to play. They are well suited as training providers, are geographically distributed, and have extensive experience with adult learners and literacy development. This places them in the unique position of having the ability to combine the educational services of literacy and certification training to the adult learner, recovery drop-out population. It places the state in the unique position of being able to leverage existing workforce education resources with additional funding support. The leveraging of community college certification programs with increased state support will enable economic sustainability for employers seeking a skilled workforce as well as for individuals seeking a living wage.
- Other states such as Illinois and Washington have successfully integrated Adult Basic Education into their state community college agencies. It would be appropriate to consider lessons learned from these states. The most important one is the identification of Adult Basic Education as a pathway to higher education including skill certificates and associate degrees.
- Administrative oversight for Adult Basic Education should be aligned with the state's goals for where it sees Adult Basic Education as Texas moves forward with a master plan for education. This includes aligning Adult Basic Education with state goals for "Closing the Gaps," and the work of the P-16 Councils.