



Testimony SB23 007 Adult Education

Senate Education Committee – Jan. 23, 2023

Here are 3 ways SB23-007 improves adult education in Colorado.

Local Control

Accessibility

Flexibility

Local Control: Other states have programs for the State to award adults Over age 21 a high school diploma. Wisconsin has had such a program for over 30 years. Adults will be able to obtain a high school diploma based on Colorado rules.

Accessibility: Some people are more comfortable with a “paper and pencil” test than a test on the computer. Yes, we want to improve adult learners’ digital literacy. But the High School Equivalency tests – GED and HiSET – are now almost exclusively online. It is very hard to get an exception to take a paper test. The online tests include “short answer” responses and an essay. There is a time limit. A person’s typing skill can affect how well they do on the test.

Allowing “paper and pencil” testing removes typing skills as a barrier to getting a high school diploma or equivalency. This bill makes a Colorado high school diploma more accessible.

Flexibility for adult learners. This bill promotes an individual education plan for each learner. Within the structure of the state diploma requirements, the learner can have a say in what they want to learn. When learners have a say in the goal, they are more likely to stay with the program and get that high school diploma.

Flexibility for adult education programs. The bill will allow for more realistic progress reporting for each learner. This is especially important for serving the 100,000 Colorado adults, born in the USA, who read below 4th grade level. This number is based on a 2019 Data Sheet from the US National Center for Education Statistics combined with the Census Bureau estimate of Colorado’s adult population. (When you put those two pieces of information together, you actually get around 132,000, so 100,000 Colorado adults reading below 4th grade level is a conservative estimate.) These are people with NO developmental limitations, NO acquired cognitive limitations, NO English language limitations. These are some of the workers that Colorado businesses are looking for. And these adults need to read better.

In the current state adult education law, “progress” is linked to a rigid national reporting system connected with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. In that system, an adult who starts instruction barely knowing alphabet must show 3rd grade reading skills on a computerized test to be counted as making “progress.” After only 40 hours of instruction. That’s unrealistic.

With this bill, Colorado can develop progress reporting requirements that work for the State and for the adult learner.

Local Control. Accessibility. Flexibility. SB23-007 is a big step in the right direction.