



November 6, 2024

Dear CBS Colleagues,

As we prepare for the upcoming presidential administration transition, I want to address some concerns that were raised by many of you at the Fall 2024 Council for Basic Skills (CBS) meeting. These concerns revolve around the funding and administration of the federal Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) that provides the foundation for Basic Education for Adults programs at your institutions, and the effect that rhetoric regarding proposed mass deportations has on many of the students engaged in our programs. I would like to address each concern and offer information and support.

## **AEFLA Funding and Administration**

We are funded by AEFLA to assist adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills for employment and economic self-sufficiency. This includes assisting immigrants and English learners in improving their English and math proficiency and understanding the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. As Title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and one of six core programs authorized by WIOA, AEFLA also plays an integral role in the workforce development system by providing access to educational services for adult learners through the one-stop delivery system. While playing an instrumental role in adult attainment of a secondary school diploma, AEFLA also aims to assist in the transition to postsecondary education and training through career pathways.

AEFLA has traditionally enjoyed widespread bipartisan support in both the House and the Senate. In the Fiscal Year 2025 House Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Bill, which proposed cuts of 13% to the Department of Education, AEFLA remained level funded. On the Senate side, Appropriations Chair Patty Murray (D-WA) championed the passage of WIOA in 2014, and Vice Chair Susan Collins (R-ME) is a member of the Senate Literacy Caucus. While nothing is ever certain, AEFLA funding levels do not appear to be an immediate concern.

Administration of AEFLA funds could shift. President-elect Donald Trump has said on several occasions that he will shut down the Department of Education if he is re-elected. If this were to take place, AEFLA would most likely join the other WIOA titles currently administered by the Department of Labor. It is worth noting that shutting down a federal agency would require an act of Congress.

## **Impact of Potential Deportation Actions on Our Students**

Most concerns expressed at CBS centered on Trump's claims that, if elected, his administration "will carry out the largest domestic deportation operation in American history." Many of us remember the first Trump administration, when the threat of deportation alone created a situation where our most vulnerable students felt unsafe or were unsure if they were safe on campus. We have collected

stories of ICE agents setting up across the street from where English language programs held classes, which created a climate of intimidation for our students. Increased ICE activities in our communities could have a dramatic impact on our students' lives and the daily experiences they bring into the classroom, not to mention their decision to enroll or come to class.

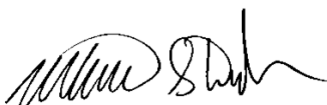
These concerns are real. But while we do not have all the answers, we do have support, and we do have resources. Governor Inslee's Executive Order 17-01, "Reaffirming Washington's Commitment to Tolerance, Diversity, and Inclusiveness," directs the state of Washington to remain a welcoming jurisdiction that embraces diversity with compassion and tolerance and recognizes the value of immigrants. Further, executive and small cabinet agencies are directed to continue to provide assistance and services to Washingtonians, regardless of citizenship or legal status, to the extent allowed by law. While this EO and agency guidance could change under a different governorship, we would like to remind programs that there is no state residency or U.S. citizenship requirement for BEdA participation. Proof of residency or citizenship is not required to enroll in Basic Education for Adults classes.

While SBCTC cannot provide legal advice to students or programs, we can point you to quality resources and encourage you to seek out and share information and strategies through the Council for Basic Skills. One such resource is the American Civil Liberties Union "[Know Your Rights](#)" website, which outlines rights guaranteed in the Constitution regardless of immigration status. Another is the Immigrant Legal Resource Center, which publishes "[Red Cards](#)," pocket-sized resources that explain core constitutional rights and provide sample statements that people can make based on those rights. These cards are provided free on request, can be printed locally, and are available in multiple languages. In addition, these and other organizations offer workshops and learning opportunities. Please also remember that your own institutions will have local procedures for protecting students while on campus.

We want you to know that we are staying tuned to the news coming out of DC in the coming weeks and months and seeking resources that will help you to continue to provide the best educational services possible to your communities. We remain committed to advocating for and supporting our students, particularly the most vulnerable among them. We encourage you to stay informed, remain vigilant, and use available resources to protect the rights and well-being of all students. Together, we can continue to provide an inclusive and safe learning environment to the very best of our ability, regardless of the outcome of the election.

Thank you for all you do for students and for the concerns you have raised on their behalf.

Sincerely,



William Durden

Director, Basic Education for Adults