



Michigan League FOR Human Services

Testimony on FY 2011-12 School Aid Budget Senate School Aid Appropriations Subcommittee

**Peter Ruark
April 12, 2011**

Good morning, Chairman Walker and members of the subcommittee. I am Peter Ruark, Senior Policy Analyst for the Michigan League for Human Services. The League is a nonprofit, nonpartisan statewide policy and advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that Michigan's low-income residents achieve economic security. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

State funding for adult education is appropriated as a categorical in the School Aid Fund. A recent draft recommendation for the School Aid budget would eliminate all funding for adult education, leaving federal funding as the sole source of support for adult education in Michigan. **The Michigan League for Human Services opposes cutting or eliminating School Aid categorical funding for adult education.**

Michigan has already seen a large reduction in state funding for adult education during the past decade. During Fiscal Years 1997 to 2001, it was funded at \$80 million, but each year since Fiscal Year 2004, funding has been below \$25 million. As federal funding has also been reduced, total funding for adult education has dropped from \$96.3 million in 2001 to only \$36.6 million in 2010. Eliminating state funding would reduce total funding to approximately \$14-15 million.

The funding reductions have resulted in fewer people enrolling in and completing adult education programs. The 62 percent decrease in federal and state funding has been accompanied by a 63 percent decline in enrollment. Reducing or eliminating funds for adult education would result in a further decline in enrollment.

The League believes this is counterproductive to preparing Michigan's workforce for the 21st century. Adult education is an essential component of workforce development. Workers can no longer expect to get a well-paying manufacturing job with just a high school diploma, as more employers require some kind of postsecondary occupational credential. However, many workers lack certain basic skills (in reading, writing or mathematics) that are needed in order to participate in occupational training.

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This is where adult education fits in. It helps workers become marketable and it helps Michigan attract and keep employers. Businesses tend not to locate in places where large numbers of adults lack basic reading and mathematics skills.

The governor's proposed budget will fund adult education at \$22 million per year—the same amount that has been appropriated for the most recent two years. **The Michigan League for Human Services urges you to preserve this funding or to even increase it**, as an essential component of Michigan's workforce development strategy.