



Connecticut Association for Human Services  
110 Bartholomew Avenue · Suite 4030  
Hartford, Connecticut 06106  
[www.cahs.org](http://www.cahs.org)

Good afternoon, Chairman Morris and members of the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus.

My name is Ren Brockmeyer and I am a policy analyst for Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS). CAHS works to eliminate poverty by promoting economic opportunity for success through our policy and program work. The opportunity to present our policy direction for the 2015 Legislative Session is greatly appreciated.

***Closing the Gap: Transitioning Tier 3 Non-Traditional Adult Learners Beyond Remediation Programs in Connecticut***

PA 12-40 changed the way community colleges provided remedial education to non-traditional adult students who have either a high school diploma or GED, have been out of school for at least four years, are self-supporting or supporting a family, and are underemployed in low-wage, low-skilled jobs. Non-traditional learners often place in the remedial programs at our community colleges when they attempt to pursue post-secondary opportunities. The Connecticut Legislature recognized the limitations of community college remediation programs; these programs contributed to a dizzying experience for Tier 3 adults placed in non-credit remedial courses that cost the same as credit bearing classes resulting in students languishing for multiple semesters and years, using PELL grant money and achieving little or no progress. As an adult educator, I have worked with the non-traditional adult student population of learners in GED settings, as an educator in workplace literacy programs for manufacturing companies, and at the community college level. I am familiar with their struggles and aspirations.

In June of 2013, an amendment to PA 12-40 mandated community colleges to partner with adult education providers to meet the needs of Tier 3 non-traditional adult learners, at no cost. This partnership recognizes the value of adult education professionals to meet the extenuating needs of the Tier 3 adult learners.

According to the United Way's ALICE Report for 2014, adults with low literacy skills who have graduated from high school or received their GED comprise a large portion of Connecticut's population living at survival level, as indicated in the 2014 United Way's ALICE report. The Household Survival Budget calculates the actual costs of necessities (housing, childcare, food, health care, and transportation) adjusted for different counties and household types. The Household Survival Budget is used to define the average level of income, or the ALICE Threshold, a household needs to afford the basics. Households with income less than the ALICE Threshold, but more than the Federal Poverty Level, qualify as ALICE.

Furthermore, the ALICE report showed that "the underemployment rate is significantly higher for low-income households, especially in Greater New Haven, where the underemployment rate is 34 percent



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for those earning less than \$15,000 per year, 18 percent for those earning \$15,000 to \$50,000 per year, and only 7 percent for those earning above \$100,000 (DataHaven, 2012).

Economic advancement for the state is dependent upon the abilities of our residents to not only earn enough to care for their families, but to be able to return to their communities and the state through purchase power and as taxpayers.

The 2014 roll-out of the community colleges' Transition Programs has been spotty and slow to date. The community colleges' lack of true partnerships with adult education providers under-utilizes the knowledge and capabilities of these professionals. The number of non-traditional learners referred to adult education providers is low. By relying solely on the referral from community college enrollment placement numbers, we are looking at a false representation of remediation need. Placement scores of potential community college enrollees only touch on the few non-traditional adult learners who have the courage to try to enroll in a community college. As indicated by the United Way's ALICE Report (2014), there are many more in residents in your communities who may be fearful of pursuing post-secondary learning because of prior negative learning experiences, or because many programs do not accommodate work hours, childcare, transportation, and most importantly, costs.

Community colleges, by design, are designated to prepare students for college level associate degrees or preparation for a four-year degree. As the parent of two successful community college graduates, who went on to four year and graduate degrees, I can attest to the value of this process. However, it is not a successful process for non-traditional adult students who need greater orientation to their learning needs, the expectations of post-secondary education, and their ability to commit and successfully complete any program. In this venue, adult education providers can be the essential link in a pipeline that prepares Tier 3 adult learners for post-secondary education, resulting in greater success for graduation rates at community colleges.

To meet the challenge of non-traditional adult students, three things need to happen. First, the funding stream for this endeavor must be secure. Trying to educate and prepare a skilled workforce on temporarily funded initiatives, with good intentions that only to drop by the wayside, will not serve our residents nor move our economy forward. Secondly, we need to assess what Tier 3 learners and employers realistically want and need, and what prevents this from happening. Third, adult education providers need to be in an essential role to provide aligned remediation programs for post-secondary advancement. Collaboration between adult and higher education, communities, and business and industry is essential to this success.



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CAHS is dedicated to working to see this come to fruition by working to partner these entities to create a strong and meaningful education system for this population of non-traditional adult learners. We strive to build alliances that maximize funding and social capacity to make this happen. We would welcome the opportunity to work with the Caucus, adult and higher education providers, and others in working to create educational growth and opportunity for the Connecticut adults in need of this effort.

Thank you for the opportunity to address this initiative with you today.