



Responses from Congressman Edward Markey (D-Malden) Candidate for U.S Senate

1. Do you believe adult basic education is a right or a privilege? Should we have a social contract for adult basic education the way we do for K-12 education?

Adult basic education is a right and achieving greater adult literacy is essential to ensuring that individuals can find a meaningful role in our society. With more than 40 million adults in need of basic skills or greater literacy—and only 2.8 million actually receiving services—now is the time to further our commitment to helping end adult illiteracy. I support a social contract with our communities that pledges to help adults, either through remediation at community colleges or through community action programs, achieve literacy.

2. Currently our state has many residents who lack access to adult basic education services either because there is no program in their area, the programs in their area have long waiting lists or there are scheduling, transportation or child care barriers. What steps would you take to correct this lack of access?

We begin to meet this challenge by increasing the number of literacy programs throughout Massachusetts. Many of these programs are funded through Community Services Block Grants (CSBG) and the Community Action Programs across the State. I have been a longtime proponent of the CSBG program, leading a letter in Congress each year to the Appropriations committee urging full funding for this crucial program. I believe that CSBG programs, as our only comprehensive approach to combating poverty, are a crucial system we need to better fund moving forward. I am also the author of the Education Rate, or “E-Rate” program, which has distributed more than \$30 billion to date nationally--\$334 million in Massachusetts—ensuring that schools and libraries are connected to the Internet. Ensuring that community centers have access to the Internet—including schools, libraries and other learning centers—helps teach adults basic digital literacy skills so that they can better compete for employment that increasingly requires knowing how to operate a computer.

3. Efforts are underway at the state and national level to raise the quality and standards of adult basic education programs and services to be comparable with that of the K-12 system, yet the ABE system receives only a small fraction of the funding that goes to the K-12 system. What would you do to increase the resources allocated to adult basic education in order to promote the development and professionalization of the field?

In the Senate, I will continue to work with my colleagues to increase funding for literacy programs; through the Workforce Investment Act, the CSBG program and community colleges that help individuals meet these challenges.

4. What do you believe should be the vision and purpose for the adult basic education system, in good economic times and bad?

My commitment to end adult illiteracy throughout Massachusetts does not waver with the economic cycle. Until we have the programs in place to ensure that individuals are receiving the literacy and job training they need to fully participate in our society, I will continue to fight for these crucial programs.