

INVEST IN MASSACHUSETTS

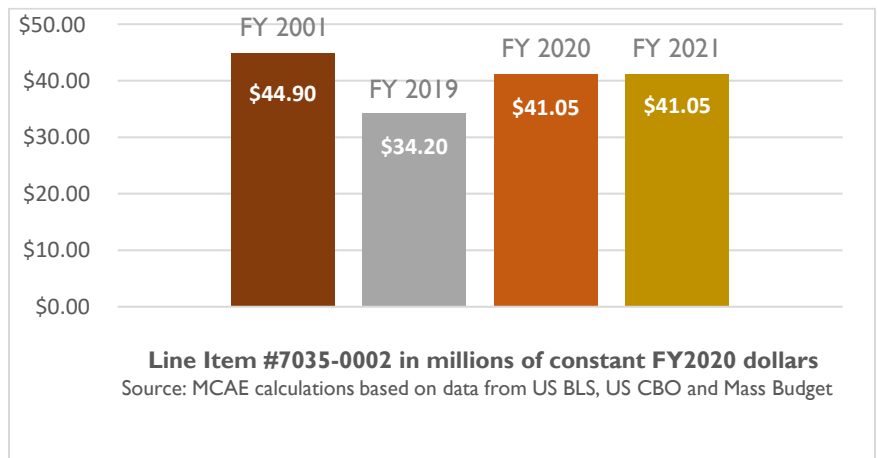
INVEST IN ADULT BASIC EDUCATION

FY 2021 BUDGET REQUEST FOR LINE ITEM #7035-0002: \$41.05 MILLION

Education is the key to success in today's society and economy. Nearly 19,000 adults rely on Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs throughout Massachusetts to gain the literacy, English language, math, and other skills they need to provide for themselves and their families. Yet, a long-term decline in the real value of public resources has severely limited the capacity of the Commonwealth's ABE system, leaving it unable to meet ongoing demand for services and struggling to maintain the level of instruction and counsel essential to learners' lasting success. More than ever in these difficult times, Massachusetts must continue to invest in ABE in order to sustain recent progress and help secure a better future for everyone in the Commonwealth.

Accordingly, the Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Education (MCAE) calls on policymakers to appropriate \$41.05 million for Adult Basic Education (Line Item #7035-0002) in FY 2021 (level funding from FY 2020). Maintaining funding at this level would allow Massachusetts to sustain the capacity of its ABE system and to:

- **Continue preparing adults for self-sufficiency**, ensuring they have the literacy and numeracy skills needed for job training and continued education;
- **Focus on underserved communities**, increasing the likelihood that learners are able enroll in programs near where they live or work;
- **Attract and retain professional staff** by improving compensation and working conditions, and provide professional development to reduce costly and de-stabilizing turnover.



Despite its far-reaching and long-lasting impact, state appropriations for Massachusetts' ABE system declined nearly 25 percent between FY 2001 and FY 2019 after adjusting for inflation, falling from \$44.9 million to \$34.2 million in constant FY 2020 dollars. Sustained investment in ABE is needed to reverse this decline and to help:

- **Prepare all adults to meet the demands of the modern labor force.** More than 458,000 adults aged 25 and older – or nearly 1 in 10 – lacked a high school credential in 2017. That same year, close to 542,000 adults aged 18 and older – also roughly 1 in 10 – were unable to speak English very well.
- **Promote economic security and self-sufficiency.** Adults without a high school credential experience lower annual earnings, higher poverty rates, and greater unemployment.
- **Build stronger families and thriving communities.** Parents' educational levels are a key indicator of children's success in school, while low literacy is associated with adverse health outcomes, including increased mortality.
- **Improve Massachusetts' long-term budget outlook.** Education can lower incarceration and recidivism rates and thus potentially save millions in corrections costs over time; on the other side of the ledger, education can also yield earnings and employment gains that ultimately bolster state tax collections.



MCAE: The Voice of Adult Education in Massachusetts

For more on adult education in Massachusetts, including a list of sources for this fact sheet, please visit www.mcae.net.

617.482.6223 • info@mcae.net