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**Testimony of Jeff McLynch, Director, Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Education,  
before the Joint Committee on Revenue,  
in support of the Fair Share Amendment (H.86/S.16),  
submitted for the record, April 11, 2019**

On behalf of the hundreds of thousands of adults in Massachusetts who lack a high school credential or are unable to speak English well enough to participate in a 21<sup>st</sup> century economy, the Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Education (MCAE) respectfully urges the members of the Joint Committee on Revenue to report the Fair Share Amendment favorably and to include it on the agenda of the Constitutional Convention on the earliest possible date. Approval of the Fair Share Amendment by the Legislature and its subsequent enactment by the people of Massachusetts would generate billions of dollars in revenue for investments in education and transportation, investments essential to our shared economic future, and would help to mitigate the inequities that now characterize the Commonwealth's tax system.

By way of background, MCAE is a statewide membership organization that champions the right of all adults to acquire critical literacy, numeracy and English language skills, for those skills lead to strong families, vibrant communities, and broadly shared economic prosperity. MCAE's member and partner organizations serve nearly 19,000 students in cities and towns throughout the Commonwealth. Adult basic education services include literacy instruction from non-reader to intermediate level, math, preparation for high school equivalency, ESOL, and citizenship classes. These services are delivered by a diverse array of entities, including community-based organizations, local educational agencies, higher education institutions, correctional institutions, businesses, and labor unions.

Adult basic education is an economic lifeline for thousands of Bay Staters and their families, as a variety of measures demonstrate quite clearly that adults without a sufficient education suffer considerable hardship. For instance, data from the American Community Survey (ACS) for the 2013-2017 period indicate that median annual earnings for adults lacking a high school credential amounted to \$25,100, nearly \$9,200 less than the median earnings of adults with such a credential and some \$35,000 below the median earnings of adults with college degrees.

Unfortunately, the demand and the need for adult basic education have long outstripped the Commonwealth's capacity to provide it. Indeed, as of December 2018, over 19,000 adults were languishing on state waiting lists, hoping to secure a spot in an instructional setting, a figure that nearly matches existing enrollment. Moreover, ACS data reveal that approximately 458,000 Massachusetts adults aged 25 and older lacked a high school credential in 2017. That same year, close to 542,000 adults aged 18 and older were unable to speak English very well.

The constrained capacity of Massachusetts' adult basic education system is attributable, in large measure, to funding decisions at both the federal and state level that stretch back nearly two decades. Since 2001, the value of federal grants to Massachusetts for adult education has declined by over 10 percent after adjusting for inflation. Worse still, state support for adult education, even after taking into account recent increases, remains approximately 24 percent below its FY 2001 level, again, after adjusting for inflation.

Adoption of the Fair Share Amendment would be a major step toward reversing this long-term funding decline and strengthening Massachusetts' adult education system. By imposing a four percent tax on incomes over \$1 million, the Fair Share Amendment would ultimately yield billions of dollars of additional state revenue each year, funds that, under the Amendment, would be allocated to education and transportation purposes. Importantly, last year's Supreme Judicial Court ruling effectively barring such an allocation in the citizen-initiated version of the Fair Share Amendment does not apply to this latest version of Amendment, as it has been introduced by members of the Legislature, who are not subject to the same restrictions as individual citizens in the amendment process.

Not only would adoption of the Fair Share Amendment generate vitally important resources for education and transportation, it would do so in a highly equitable manner. At present, according to the Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center, the very wealthiest 1 percent of Bay Staters – those with incomes over \$680,400 per year – pay just 6.8 percent of those incomes in state and local taxes on average. In stark contrast, the poorest 20 percent of taxpayers – a group that includes many adult learners and their families – pays an effective state and local tax rate of 10 percent. Accordingly, given the incidence of the Fair Share Amendment, its adoption would help to bring greater balance to the Commonwealth's tax system and ensure that the most well-off among us contribute their share to the operations of state government.

A well-educated, highly-skilled workforce and a robust, reliable, and accessible transportation network are the building blocks of a modern economy that works for everyone. Without new investments in these areas, Massachusetts's working families will continue to struggle and the prospects of the Commonwealth as whole will dim. Accordingly, MCAE strongly supports the Fair Share Amendment and urges the Joint Committee – and the Legislature as a whole – to approve it as quickly as possible.

I thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony for the record. If any members of the Joint Committee should have any questions about the information I have presented here or about MCAE and its work, I may be reached at 617-482-6223 or via email at [jeffmclynch@mcae.net](mailto:jeffmclynch@mcae.net).