

MA Coalition for Adult Education Questionnaire:

Answers from Congressman John Olver (MA-01)

October 7, 2010

- 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 students?**

Adult basic education is a right, though unfortunately it is not one that has always been available to those who seek it. I do believe that adults should be guaranteed access to a basic education, particularly if they were denied that access when they were young and are stalled in their socio-economic and career growth as a result.

- 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?**

I believe we should standardize adult basic education services as a component of any wide-ranging education legislation – as was done in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act – and maintain a strong and steady investment in those services. A struggling economy like ours requires the government to spend strategically in areas that will spur recovery, and allowing adult workers to enhance their knowledge base will increase their value to employers and keep the workforce moving. Investment in adult education, therefore, makes both good social and economic policy sense.

- 3) What steps would you take to maximize the percent of adult basic education dollars that support activities leading to quality instruction without sacrificing accountability?**

Just as we maintain an ongoing practice of assessing and updating education at the K-12 level, we must do so for adult basic education. Rather than emphasizing college readiness, however, these assessment standards should measure a program's effectiveness in workforce readiness and career growth for participants. Not only will this provide accountability, but it allows us to identify the most effective programs so we can provide better models for all adult basic education programs.

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

In this economic climate, it is more important than ever that adults – particularly those with families to provide for – be able to access the education and training that they need to compete in our workforce. Though economic turmoil can constrain the amount of money the government has at the ready, we must still maintain a strategic level of investment in adult basic education. It is a critical tool for improving our workforce and ending this period of economic crisis.

- 5) Will you vote for an annual federal funding allocation of \$850 million to fund the national adult basic education system (WIA Title II) and to increase access for the unemployed, new immigrants and other at risk populations, as proposed in the Adult Education and Economic Growth Act sponsored by Congressman Hinojosa and Kennedy?**

Yes.