

INVEST IN MASSACHUSETTS

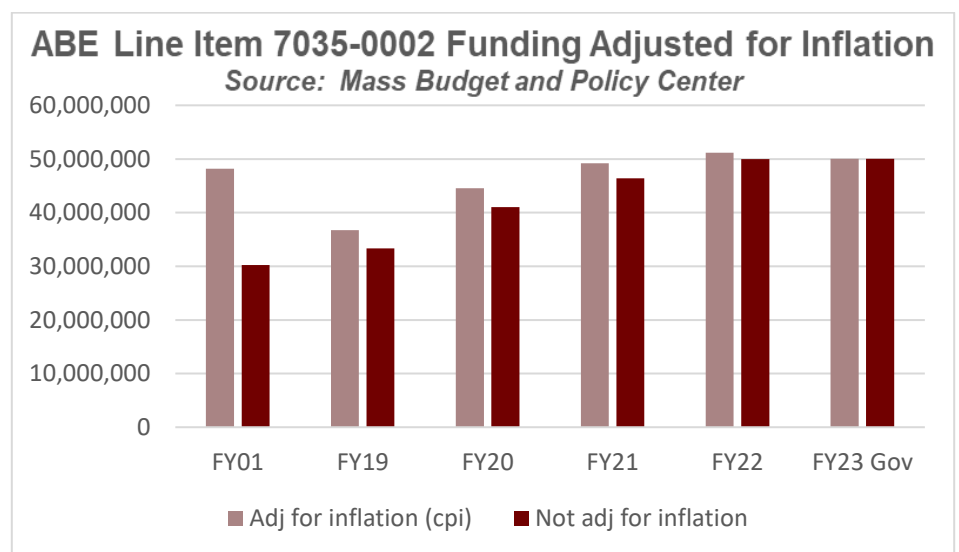
INVEST IN ADULT BASIC EDUCATION

Education is the key to success in today’s society and economy. Nearly 19,000 Massachusetts adults rely on more than 125 Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs across the state to gain the literacy and English-language skills needed to qualify for further education, job training, and better employment, and to reach their full potential as family members, productive workers, and citizens. ABE is an essential component of the Commonwealth’s economic engine: Adults need an education and skills to be self-sufficient; our economy needs skilled workers to move forward. ABE programs, teachers, and students are facing unprecedented challenges and new expenses as a result of the pandemic, yet they have persisted. Continued deep investment is needed to sustain their success and maintain their forward momentum.

FY 2023 BUDGET REQUEST FOR LINE ITEM #7035-0002: \$55 MILLION

Funding at this level would allow Massachusetts to expand and to strengthen the capacity of its ABE system and to:

- **Serve more adults**, moving hundreds who want and need to learn off waiting lists and into programs.
- **Reach underserved communities**, increasing the likelihood that adults can enroll in programs near where they live or work;
- **Attract and retain professional staff** by improving compensation and working conditions to reduce costly and de-stabilizing turnover.
- **Provide needed funds to deal with COVID-related disruptions to service** (e.g., technology, curriculum revisions, advising for students).



State appropriations for Massachusetts’ ABE system declined nearly 25 percent between FY2001 and FY2019 after adjusting for inflation.

CONTINUED INVESTMENT IN ABE IS NEEDED TO:

- **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. Post-pandemic employment opportunities expect to be radically different as some industries have been decimated. Adults will need new and better skills to obtain new jobs.
- **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. During a pandemic, the ability to process health care information is vital for public health.
- **Improve Massachusetts’ long-term budget outlook.** Education can lower incarceration and recidivism rates and thus potentially save millions in corrections costs over time. These savings, the other economic benefits of education cited above, higher earnings and employment gains leading to higher state tax collections are all positive returns on the investment in adult basic education.

