
ADVANCING OPPORTUNITY THROUGH GED PATHWAYS: STRENGTHENING ADVOCACY FOR ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY

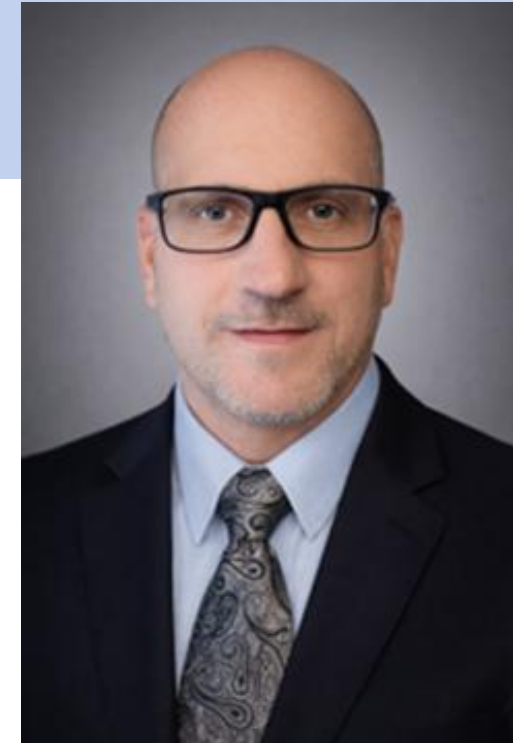
JULY 29, 2026 – GED CONFERENCE - ATLANTA

Jeffrey A. Fantine, PhD

Executive Director



Jeffrey A. Fantine, Ph.D.



➤ **Over 38 years in Adult Education**

➤ **Former:**

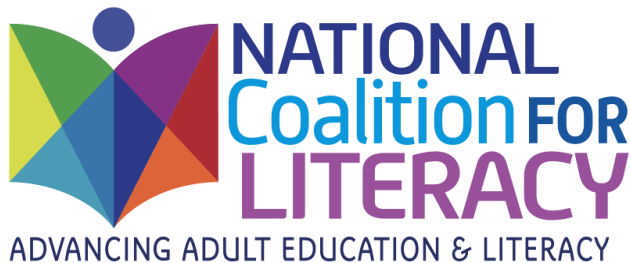
- Tutor/Tutor Trainer/Director of Community-Based Literacy Program
- Instructor (ABE & ESOL) and Director of Local Adult Education Program
- Director, Adult Education Professional Development Center (Ohio)
- State Director of Adult Education (Maine)
- Director of OCTAE's National Career Pathways Project
- COABE Vice President, NCL Vice President and AALPD Chair

➤ **Current:**

- **National Consultant/Trainer: Adult Education & Literacy / Workforce Development / Career Pathways / Serving Low-Level Learners**
- **Executive Director, National Coalition for Literacy**
- **Professor of Adult Education Graduate Studies at OSU**



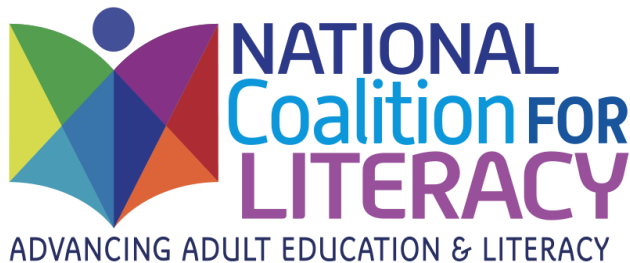
What is NCL?



- **Founded in 1983 by a group of national leaders to highlight the need for adult literacy.**
- **Established as an incorporated non-profit in 2003 to ensure that leaders and policy makers at the national level make informed decisions about policies, regulations, and funding for adult education and family literacy.**
- **NCL is an alliance of organizations and individuals dedicated to advancing adult education, family literacy, and English language acquisition in the United States.**
 - **Vision: Adults have the skills to thrive**
 - **Mission: Advance the field of adult education and literacy**



Strategic Priorities



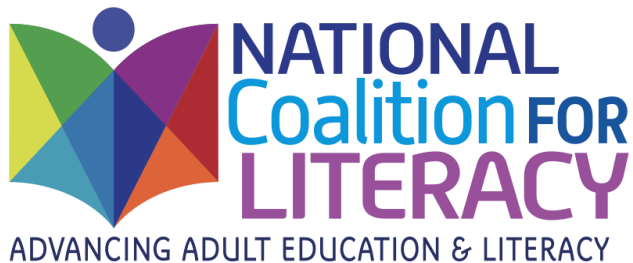
- 1 Advancing Collective Advocacy & Policy Influence
- 2 Increasing Visibility & Public Awareness
- 3 Engaging Partners and Fostering Cross-Sector Collaboration
- 4 Building Capacity – Expanding Access and Improving Outcomes

CONVENE – ALIGN - AMPLIFY



Strengthening Advocacy for Adult Education and Literacy

2026 Federal Advocacy Priorities



- 1** **FY27 Appropriations -**
Invest in Adult and Family Literacy for a Competitive Workforce
- 2** **WIOA Reauthorization -**
Build an Integrated Skills-Based Workforce System
- 3** **Career Pathways -**
Align Adult Education, CTE, Workforce Systems & Apprenticeships
- 4** **English Language Learning –**
Expand Workforce Participation Across Industries and Drive Economic Growth



Issue Advocacy



DEFINITION: Educating and engaging others around an issue to build awareness, understanding, and support for solutions. It focuses on the issue, not on supporting or opposing a candidate.

Includes:

- Sharing data, research, and learner stories
- Educating policymakers and community leaders
- Building partnerships and coalitions
- Raising public awareness
- Recommending policy solutions
- Highlighting the impact of adult education

Is NOT:

- Endorsing or opposing political candidates
- Asking people to vote for or against someone
- Partisan campaign activity
- Electioneering

Advocacy advances opportunities for adult learners by informing, influencing, and engaging decision-makers.



Why Advocacy Matters

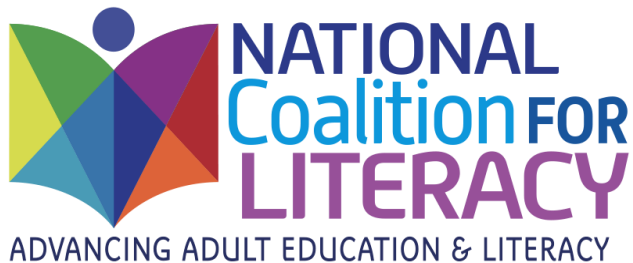
Why is advocating for adult education and literacy important in today's environment?

Why is it our responsibility to advocate for adult education and literacy?

Advocacy is not about lobbying, it is about relationship building, storytelling, education, and influence.



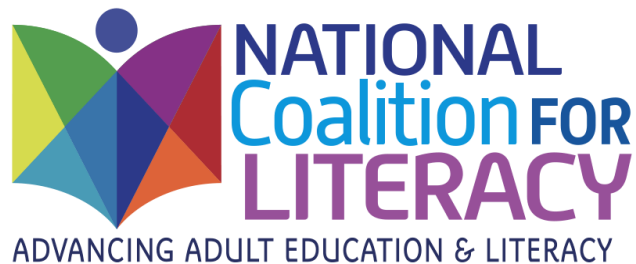
Session Objectives



- 1 Explain the value of adult education using language that resonates with different audiences.
- 2 Connect GED programs to workforce development and economic mobility.
- 3 Identify current advocacy opportunities.
- 4 Leave with one concrete advocacy action they can implement immediately.



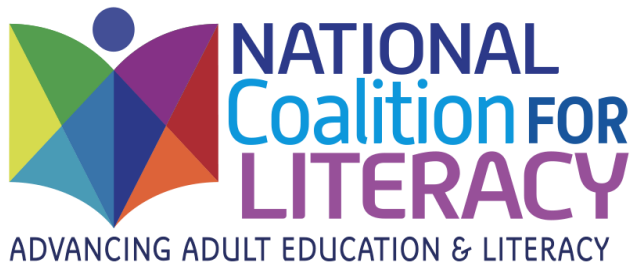
Why Invest in Adult Education?



If Congress asked you today, why should we continue to invest in adult education, what would you say?



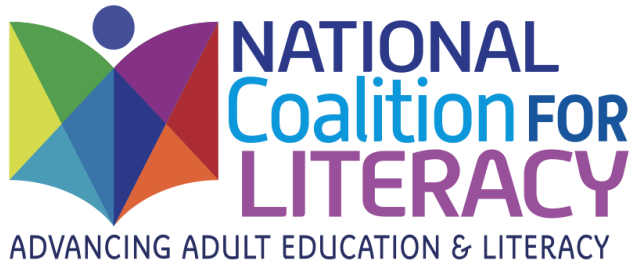
Advocacy Talking Points



- **The Need:**
 - Approximately 60 million adults in the U.S. are at the lowest level of literacy, numeracy and adaptive problem-solving skills (PIACC – 2023)
 - Over 20 million adults in the U.S. lack a high school credential and another 20 million have limited English proficiency (ACS – 2024)
- Adult Education is an essential pillar of the education and workforce development pipeline, providing critical foundational skills that are essential for long-term, sustainable employment. Foundational skills are workforce skills.
- WIOA is required to prioritize services to individuals with the greatest barriers to employment and Adult Education is the primary system designed to meet this mandate, serving individuals with low literacy and numeracy skills, English learners, individuals without a high school credential, and others who are often the hardest to reach and serve.
- Adult Education serves as the on-ramp for millions of individuals to access further education and training opportunities, such as CTE.



Changing the Narrative



Instead of:

- We served 500 students.
- We Awarded 45 GEDs.
- We teach literacy.

Say:

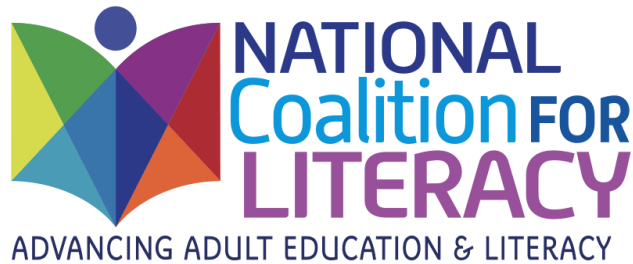
- We strengthened our local workforce.
- We prepared adults for careers and economic mobility.
- We develop foundational skills employers need.

MOVE FROM



Strengthening Advocacy for Adult Education and Literacy

Advocacy Makeover



We helped 300 adults earn their GED.

We provide adult education.

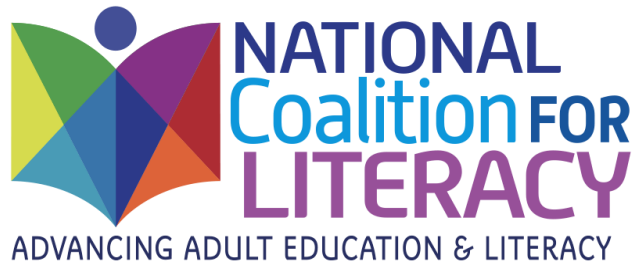
Rewrite these statements so it would resonate with:

What are some of the trending terms we should be using in our messaging about adult education and literacy?

- **Legislator**
- **Employer**
- **Chamber of Commerce**
- **Local Workforce Board**
- **Foundation**
- **Public**



Advocacy in Action



What's your one thing? Post what you're going to do on the Conference App.

What's one thing you can do to advocate for adult education over the next month or two:

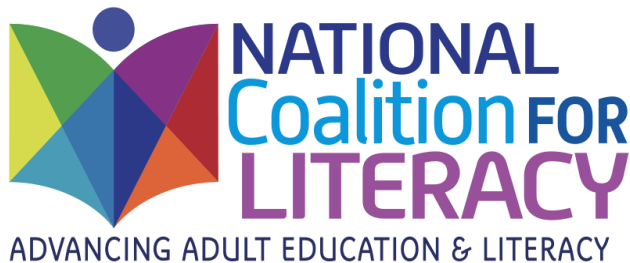
- **Contact a legislator (local, state, federal) or other stakeholder.**
- **Write an op-ed.**
- **Invite a legislator (local, state, federal) or other stakeholder to your program/classroom.**
- **Celebrate AEFL Week – September 13-19, 2026.**
- **Join a coalition (like NCL)**
- **Collect and share learner stories.**



Advocacy in Action

- **Contact YOUR Senators and Representative**

- <https://www.senate.gov/senators/senators-contact.htm>
- <https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>



- **Contact Members of Relevant Committees**

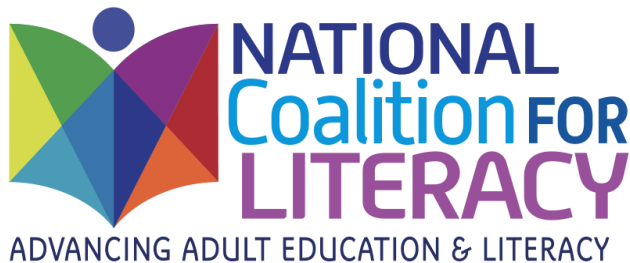
- [House Education & Workforce Committee](#)
- [House Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee](#)
- [Senate Health-Education-Labor-Pensions Committee](#)
- [Senator Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee](#)

- **Connect with Member's Education Staffer**
- **Send Letter or Meet (In Person or Virtual)**

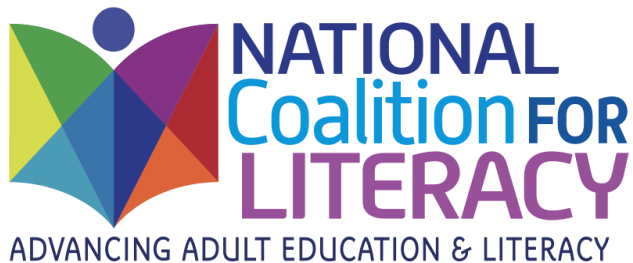


Advocacy in Action

- **Reference NCL's Letter: Organizational Sign-On: Letter to Congress**
 - **Send Letter (write your own or adapt NCL's above) –**
 - Organizations can sign-on to the letter at the link above
 - **Meet in person - Reference the talking points**
 - **Message Formula**
 - Describe the need
 - How Adult Education meets the need
 - Why it matters - Value of Adult Education – families, workforce, communities
 - Evidence
 - Student Stories
 - Ask
 - **Invite Members to Programs - Graduations and CLASSES**
 - **Replicate with state and local policy makers, as well**



Get Involved with NCL



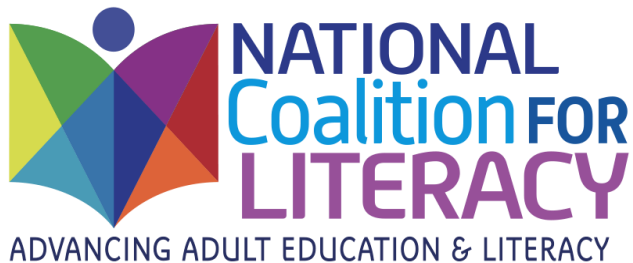
- Visit the NCL website: www.nationalcoalitionforliteracy.org
- Follow NCL on [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook](#)
- Become a Member (3 categories of membership)
 - Core
 - Associate
 - Individual

Learn more here: [Membership - National Coalition for Literacy](#)



Final Message – From GED to Opportunity

How does earning a GED change this person's life over the next five years?



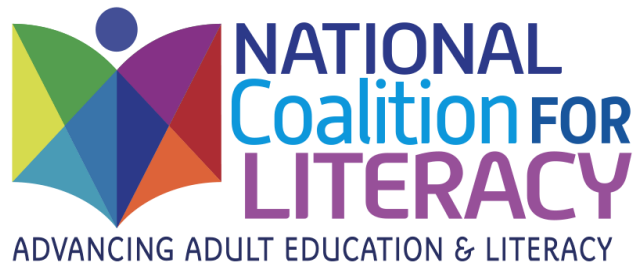
Single parent Worker displaced by automation
English learner Young adult without a diploma
Formerly incarcerated adult

**This is what we're really advocating for.
Not a program. Not a test. Opportunity!**



Reach out with Questions – Thank You – Complete Survey

- Contact me at execdirector@nationalcoalitionforliteracy.org



- Don't forget to complete the session feedback survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RCWJ9Z7>

