

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Families Highlight Workforce and Family Literacy Supports Through Adult Education

In Michigan, over 42,000 adults ages 18-34 have less than a ninth-grade education. This challenge affects not only their own employment but also the learning outcomes of their children – parent educational attainment is a leading predictor of child literacy. On Thursday, February 15, adult education students from across the state gathered at FamilySpeak in the Michigan Capitol Building to share stories with elected officials and their staff in support of adult education programs that strengthen literacy rates and grow our state’s workforce.

Speakers highlighted the skill building opportunities available at adult education programs. “I wanted to get a degree in digital media...I did not know that it was mandatory that I had to have a high school diploma,” said Charlotte Willis of Detroit, a student at Dominican Literacy Center. “The teachers are great. They provided me with a tutor for math and they have taken their time with me. Now I am one test away from getting my GED.”

Participants noted that adult ed improved their whole family’s learning. “Returning to school, modeling the importance of education, allowing my children to see me work hard gave me a larger impact with my children than I imagined,” said Beth Feldkamp, graduate of the Washtenaw Community College Adult Transitions Pathway. “I not only earned my GED but I have changed the generational cycle of education for my family.”

Speakers praised adult education for helping improve their literacy and English language attainment. “I know about the difficulties of living in a new house, in a new country, on a new continent,” said Juan Baron-Grillo, a student in Battle Creek Public Schools adult education. “It’s important to people like me living in Michigan to have a free ESL program, a friendly hand to provide tools to improve our chances of being successful citizens.” Ultimately, nearly every adult spoke to the profound hope and encouragement their educators brought to the work. “It was a place where everyone supported each other,” said Luis Calzada, graduate of Novi Adult Education. “They helped me find an internship with an international robotics company.”

This FamilySpeak was hosted by the Michigan Association of Community and Adult Education (MACAE), working with Michigan’s Children, a statewide advocacy organization. FamilySpeak empowers parents and caregivers to speak directly to individuals who impact education policy and practice and gives policymakers a chance to hear directly from their constituents about how programs are working and what services can really help them succeed. It also illustrates the long-term payoff in investing in family literacy and other basic skills.

Michigan’s Children is the only statewide independent voice working to ensure that public policies are made in the best interest of children and their families from cradle to career. Our emphasis is on influencing public policies to close equity gaps and ensure that children and youth who face the most challenges have supports they need to succeed in school and life. For more, contact Bobby Dorigo Jones, robert@michiganschildren.org, (517) 648-5072 or visit michiganschildren.org.

For over 30 years, the Michigan Association of Adult & Community Education (MACAE), has represented the administrators, teachers and supporters of Community Education in the State of Michigan. For more information about MACAE, contact Linda Cianferra, linda.cianferra@novik12.org, (248) 449-1718 or visit macae.org.

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