



BRUNSWICK COUNTY LITERACY COUNCIL

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BCLC News Release

Brunswick County Literacy Council Will Get One-Year Reprieve from Federal Funding Loss

Eleven adult education providers facing a loss of government funding, including the Brunswick County Literacy Council, will receive assistance to mitigate that loss as a result of a provision added to the 2018-2019 North Carolina state budget by Rep. Chuck McGrady (R-Henderson County), the North Carolina Literacy Association announced June. 6.

The North Carolina Community College System, (the System Office) through its College and Career Readiness Department, receives \$21 million in funding from the federal government to implement the Adult Education & Family Literacy Act of the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act. These funds are provided to each state to ensure the workforce is receiving the education, training, and support needed to provide economically strong communities, which in turn reduces unemployment, underemployment, and the use of welfare programs.

The funds are then awarded by the System Office to adult education providers across North Carolina, including community colleges and nonprofits that provide adult literacy and English as a second language (ESL) services. The System Office recently changed the awarding process, including use of a new funding formula based on a point system for meeting or exceeding state-negotiated targets for measurable student skills gains. The new process left five community colleges and six nonprofit literacy organizations without funding.

Working with the NC Literacy Association to understand the economic impact of adult education providers across the states that were losing their traditional funding, McGrady was able to add a provision to the 2018-2019 state budget allowing up to \$2 million in mitigation funds, available for one year, for those agencies that lost funding. As a result, the Brunswick County Literacy Council, along with 10 other organizations, will receive up to 75 percent of the money they will

lose, which will ensure that approximately 2,000 adult learners across the state maintain access to services.

“The Brunswick County Literacy Council (BCLC) faces a formidable task,” said BCLC Executive Director Dorothy Hoerr. Thousands of county residents—fully one-third of adults above the age of 16—are functionally illiterate, according to the most recent statistics measuring reading skills. Over 12 percent of adult residents have no high school diploma or equivalent, 5.4 percent need the English as a second language (ESL) program, 14 percent live below the poverty level, and nearly 6 percent are unemployed.

“To everyone associated with the Brunswick County Literacy Council, these statistics are completely unacceptable,” Hoerr said. “We want to place each one of these residents into one of our programs and guide them to success as quickly as possible.” County demographics make that a challenging task, she added, because the BCLC enrolls all students who need their services. “We don’t pick and choose to accept only those with skills and personal situations who are most likely to progress quickly through the various learning levels, thus scoring enough points to meet System Office funding requirements,” she emphasized.

The Council’s training programs are free of charge to all residents through one-on-one tutoring and other programs that lead to self-sufficiency for adult learners and their families. Hoerr said that despite a budget that has not increased at all in over seven years, the BCLC has achieved significant growth, “thanks to our dedicated, unpaid volunteers and board members and to community support.”

In those seven years, she said, the BCLC has seen the following increases: number of active students from 3 to 102; number of active tutors from 5 to 38; number of active volunteers (not including board members and tutors) from 5 to over 60; and number of GEDs attained yearly by students from 0 to 13.

NC Literacy Association Board President Autumn Weil said in a statement that the association “is grateful to Representative McGrady and the NC General Assembly for allowing a year of adjustment for the community colleges and nonprofits that will need to find alternative funding sources or change how their programs are delivered.” The Association supports the development and sustained growth of independent community-based literacy programs through public awareness, advocacy, and sharing ideas and methodologies.

In a letter to McGrady expressing thanks for his intervention, for recognizing the value of literacy, and for understanding the difficulties confronting the Brunswick County Literacy Council, Hoerr said the BCLC is striving to redouble efforts to obtain reliable funding to replace the money it stands to lose under the new NC Community College System standards.

“This loss is devastating, but we want you to know that we have no intention of changing how our programs are delivered that would in any way negatively affect a single student. We will continue to work toward meeting all reasonable goals that will help us advance the quality and pace of our programs,” she stressed.

The Brunswick County Literacy Council is committed to improving the lives of all its students, for the betterment of the entire community, Hoerr said, and is grateful for the individual and civic group donations that constitute such an important part of the Council's funding.

To make a tax-deductible donation or for more information about becoming a volunteer in the fight against illiteracy, contact Brunswick County Literacy Council, 282 Ocean Highway E., P.O. Box 6, Supply, NC 28462; telephone (910) 754-7323; e-mail bcliteracy@yahoo.com; or go to www.bcliteracy.org.

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