

Coalition for Adult Literacy

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

April 21, 2005

Paul Wasserman, Lehman College: 646-338-2884

Ira Yankwitt, Literacy Assistance Center: 212-803-3356 or 718-908-2994

Steve Hinds, event coordinator: 646-344-7308 or 646-515-0095

FEDERAL BUDGET TO SLASH LITERACY CLASSES

Thousands to rally in protest in Union Square on April 22

In a city where one-quarter of adults over 25 do not have a high school diploma, where 30% of high school students are dropping out, and where one in four adults is not proficient in English, classes meant to help them get ahead are about to be slashed.

On **Friday, April 22 at 10 a.m.**, adult literacy, English language, and GED students and teachers from 58 community-based organizations, 13 campuses of The City University of New York, all three city public library systems and the NYC Department of Education will fill Union Square Park to protest budget cuts coming out of Washington. The rally will emphasize that adult literacy programs need secure, adequate funding at the city, state, and federal levels.

In his 2006 budget proposal currently under debate in Congress, **President George W. Bush proposes slashing adult education and family literacy programs funded through the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) by 64%**. This federal program is the largest source of funding for the CUNY Adult Literacy/GED Program and for many community organizations that provide adult literacy classes in the city. The proposed cuts, along with other threats at the city, state, and federal levels, could eliminate classes for tens of thousands of students in the five boroughs.

Meanwhile, important sources of adult literacy funding from New York State and New York City have remained flat for many years.

The Coalition for Adult Literacy will call on city, state, and federal legislators to oppose the proposed cuts and to assure adequate funding for adult education programs in New York. Joining the Coalition to send this message will be **City Councilwoman Margarita Lopez**, along with multicultural musical acts from conga drummers to Honduran music.

Each year, 50,000 adults in New York City take classes in GED preparation, English for speakers of other languages, reading, writing and math. The majority of students are low-wage workers and immigrants. In these classes, adults learn the skills needed to gain higher-paying jobs, support their families more adequately, enroll in college, access health care more effectively, and help their children succeed in school.

For Kalma Charles, the literacy program at Brooklyn College “gives me a second chance to get an education, and eventually a college degree.”

“These proposed funding cuts would force us to cancel classes and our waiting lists would literally explode,” adds Mae Dick, director of the Adult Learning Center at LaGuardia Community College in Long Island City, Queens.

WHAT: Rally to fight cuts to adult literacy programs

WHERE: Union Square Park (south side), West 14th Street and Broadway, Manhattan

WHEN: Friday, April 22, 10 a.m.