

IX.B.

CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION Hartford

TO BE PROPOSED:
June 6, 2018

WHEREAS, Adult education exemplifies the concept of lifelong learning with nearly ten thousand Connecticut residents in adult basic education/secondary school completion programs and nearly twelve thousand Connecticut residents in English as a Second Language (ESL) and U.S. citizenship preparation programs; and

WHEREAS, The Connecticut Association for Adult and Continuing Education (CAACE), through its CAACE Student Award, recognized six individuals who have overcome numerous obstacles and hardships to persist and succeed in adult education; and

WHEREAS, These individuals exemplify the spirit and determination necessary to achieve a goal and serve as role models to all adult and young learners in our communities; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Connecticut State Board of Education recognizes the following individuals for their accomplishments in this major adult education endeavor:

Marwa Akl	East Hartford Adult Education
Spogmai Akberzai	Middletown Adult Education
Frantz Calixte	Bridgeport Adult Education
Jessica Cintron	Norwich Adult Education
Naruemol Poolnil	Manchester Adult Education
Juliana Vrekaj	East Haven Adult Based Education

and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

Approved by a vote of _____ this sixth day of June, Two Thousand Eighteen.

Signed: _____
Dianna R. Wentzell, Secretary
State Board of Education

**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hartford**

TO: State Board of Education

FROM: Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell, Commissioner of Education

DATE: June 6, 2018

SUBJECT: Recognition of the Connecticut Association for Adult and Continuing Education Student Award Winners

Executive Summary

Introduction

Adult education is an essential component of Connecticut's lifelong educational system, providing individuals with instruction in U.S. citizenship, English as a Second Language (ESL), basic skills and secondary completion. In the 2017-18 school year, nearly ten thousand individuals were enrolled in adult basic education/secondary school completion programs and nearly twelve thousand individuals were enrolled in ESL and U.S. citizenship preparation programs. In order to persist and succeed in adult education, many of these learners face substantial challenges to balance their life activities.

History/Background

The Connecticut Association of Adult and Continuing Education (CAACE) honored six individuals from Connecticut's adult education programs on March 23, 2018, for their perseverance and accomplishments. We would like to acknowledge these individuals for their efforts and recognize them as excellent examples of lifelong learning for all students in the adult education system.

Recommendation and Justification

I recommend that the State Board of Education recognize the following individuals for their accomplishments:

**Marwa Akl
East Hartford Adult Education**

In 2015, Ms. Akl came to this country after having fled the war-torn country of Syria. Leaving her mother and two sisters behind, she arrived in the United States with minimal English skills. Although a graduate of the University of Damascus, she was unable to recover any of her education-related credentials. She credits her decision to enroll in East Hartford Adult Education as the most important step she has taken since her arrival. She is a committed student who is extremely motivated and hard working. For two years, she attended nearly every ESL class. Her English proficiency has helped turn her life around. She is able to communicate and be a part of the community. Ms. Akl has obtained a driver's license and a job, and in so doing, she has achieved a level of independence of which she is extremely proud.

Spogmai Akberzai
Middletown Adult Education

Living in Kabul, Afghanistan, non-stop rockets and bombs passed over Ms. Akberzai's house and many collided with neighborhoods and streets in her district. Despite not being able to attend school, her older sister would give her lessons while the family hid beneath a staircase away from the windows and doors. As the war continued, the family's journey of migration began, with the closest exit out of Afghanistan through Pakistan. Since the educational opportunities in Pakistan required money that her family did not have, once again education was not an option. Despite her limitations, her parents worked hard to educate the children so they could read and write. Ms. Akberzai became fluent in English, but obtaining higher education was not possible as she had no status as an Afghan and a woman in a male-dominated society. When she immigrated to the United States, obtaining a high school diploma seemed like a dream. When her doctor urged her to take the tests of General Educational Development (GED), the dream finally seemed within reach. Currently, Ms. Akberzai is planning to further her education and has applied to Middlesex Community College.

Frantz Calixte
Bridgeport Adult Education

While living comfortably in Haiti with his wife and two sons, Mr. Calixte's world fell apart when the earthquake hit in January 2010. Their entire neighborhood, including their home, was completely destroyed. Under the Temporary Protective Status, Mr. Calixte and his family moved to Bridgeport, where he joined a Haitian church and became a deacon. He quickly realized that in order to become successful, he would need to learn English. He registered for his first ESL class at the Bridgeport Learning Center and attended both day and evening classes. He did not have his driver's license, so he would walk or take the bus, yet he still managed to have perfect attendance. Mr. Calixte has taken classes to become a pastor and now has his own church. He is a role model to other students and often stays after class to help students who need help in math and English. He also guides students, who need help outside of school, to other organizations in the community where they can receive assistance. Mr. Calixte does as much as he can to give back the help that was given to him and his family.

Jessica Cintron
Norwich Adult Education

As a single mother of five children by the age of 23, Ms. Cintron was never able to complete high school even though she had a strong desire to do so. The demands of working two jobs and raising five children, along with household responsibilities, presented challenges to completing her diploma. Once Ms. Cintron decided it was finally time to take that step, she was terrified. The staff at

Jessica Cintron
Norwich Adult Education
(Cont'd)

Norwich Adult Education welcomed her and made her feel so comfortable that she wanted to keep going back. Starting with zero credits, Ms. Cintron thought she would never finish. However, giving up was not an option. She will graduate in May and is also participating in the Integrated Education and Training grant program working toward her Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) certification with hopes of progressing into a higher-level career in the medical field. Ms. Cintron chose to finish not only for herself but to show her children that, if committed to your goal, you can do whatever you want in life. Despite all her personal struggles and many responsibilities, Ms. Cintron is a dedicated student.

Naruemol Poolnil
Manchester Adult Education

Ms. Poolnil had to leave school after Grade 5 in her native Thailand. Despite the lack of education, she managed to become a successful hairdresser and open her own salon. When she arrived in the United States, she could not speak, read, or write in English; therefore, she enrolled in ESL classes. After making her way through the various levels, she was introduced to the high school completion options. After extensive classes and studying, she has successfully passed three of the GED® tests and is on her way to achieving her goal of attaining a high school diploma. Ms. Poolnil has started exploring career opportunities by completing the Manchester Adult and Continuing Education's Business Academy. She completed all of this work while maintaining two jobs. Having sought out every resource that adult education can provide, she has found her way. Ms. Poolnil represents how adult education can propel someone who left school after Grade 5 to a position where she can achieve her dreams.

Juliana Vrekaj
East Haven Adult Based Education

Ms. Vrekaj began attending GED classes at East Haven Adult Education five years ago. Although she already had a high school diploma from her home country of Albania, as an asylum seeker, she was unable to obtain her secondary transcript from her native land. In order to start college, she would need a high school credential. After taking classes and successfully passing the GED® test and earning her credential, Ms. Vrekaj rejoined East Haven Adult Education and began Citizenship classes. Today she and her husband are both United States citizens and were able to bring her parents after two years of petitioning the government on their behalf. With that hurdle completed, Ms. Vrekaj became a paraprofessional in the East Haven School System. Continuing to follow her dreams, she received an Associate's Degree at Gateway Community College in December and will begin classes at Southern Connecticut

Juliana Vrekaj
East Haven Adult Based Education
(Cont'd)

State University this spring. Her new goal is to enter a Connecticut Teacher Education Program specializing in Elementary Education. Since East Haven Adult Education was an important part of her life, she returned to help those in need. Ms. Vrekaj has fulfilled her American dream.

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