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New York State Assembly Testimony

Higher Education Committee

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I want to thank Chairperson Deborah Glick and members of the Assembly Standing Committee on Higher Education for convening this Hearing and creating this opportunity to submit testimony in support of the New York State Education Department's Bridge to College & Careers Pilot Program. I am Stacie Evans, Literacy Advisor in the Mayor's Office of Workforce Development. As a former adult literacy instructor and program director, I thank the Committee for its ongoing focus on adult literacy.

The Mayor's Office of Workforce Development (WKDEV) leads the Citywide effort to implement Mayor Bill de Blasio's Career Pathways vision. WKDEV builds the capacity of City agencies and service providers to implement the vision, provides expertise in program design, identifies new opportunities for funding, and makes strategic connections across entities and programs. In November 2014, Mayor de Blasio unveiled *Career Pathways: One City Working Together*, a transformative, 10-point plan to expand access to career-track jobs in fast-growing industry sectors, improve job quality, and foster a more cohesive workforce system. The Mayor's economic mobility goal is to build the coordination and capacity of the workforce system so that, by 2020, we are training 30,000 New Yorkers a year, building a strong, resilient workforce supported by a robust and flexible array of education and training programs and services. In the

year since *Career Pathways* was released, WKDEV has laid the foundation for system-wide change.

WKDEV works in partnership with more than a dozen City agencies as well as business leaders, education and training providers, our NYC Workforce Development Board, and community stakeholders, taking a collaborative approach to ensuring New York City's economic vitality. WKDEV's value add in the realignment of the system lies in our focus on developing and supporting coordinated services between workforce and economic development agencies, allowing City workforce programs to align around the common goal of improving job outcomes while providing higher-quality services that speak to the specific needs of different populations.

One of the key initiatives WKDEV is focused on is the development and implementation of bridge programs. Bridge programs pair educational instruction with workforce content and a career focus to connect low literacy youth and adults to clearly-defined education and/or employment outcomes such as entry into HSE programs, college, occupational training, or employment. Bridge programs have three core components: sector-focused basic skills instruction including partnership with employers and/or higher education providers, strong handoffs between the basic education provider and the destination program, and support services, including college and career counseling and transition support. Bridge programs can be developed to serve learners at all levels. The health career training program that I created in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, for example, was developed for English language learners. Program completers earned an industry-recognized credential and placement in positions such as Certified Nursing Assistant, Pharmacy Technician, and Medical Office Associate.

WKDEV is working with and supporting bridge program implementation in development or currently underway through the Department of Small Business Services, the Department of

Youth and Community Development, the City University of New York, and the Human Resources Administration. We recognize the acute need for bridge instruction to support the advancement of New Yorkers with low educational attainment and limited work skills.

We applaud the NYSED description of bridge program components including: 1) curricula and teaching models that provide instruction contextualized to a high-demand sector matched to employer needs; 2) supplemental support from case managers; 3) coordination to proactively build strong relationships with employers, colleges, and advanced education and training opportunities. We are encouraged by NYSED's proposal to provide substantial funding for comprehensive bridge models as well as more modest funding to adapt existing literacy programs and support NYSED's proposal to develop these new programs as a large-scale pilot – up to 30 programs would be funded, providing ample data for evaluation, informing the continued funding and development of bridge programs in the state.

WKDEV looks forward to partnering with NYSED in the development of bridge strategies and technical assistance and the roll-out of this exciting new program. We anticipate working with NYSED in supporting the inclusion of strong employer partners in the development of curricula and the building of strong pathways for program participants.

Ensuring the full funding of programs such as NYSED's proposed Bridge to College and Careers Pilot Program is critical to the success of our system-transformation efforts in New York City, and will impact adult learners and strengthen adult education programs and services across the state. NYSED's proposal for \$10 million in State funding for bridge is an important investment in workforce education for the most in-need New Yorkers.

