

**Testimony before the Senate Pensions and Labor Committee
Regarding SB 330 – Better Skills for Adult Learners**

Given by Andrew Bradley, Senior Policy Analyst, Indiana Institute for Working Families
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Good morning Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. I would like to begin by thanking Chairman Boots for providing this hearing and for authoring the bill on this important subject.

My name is Andrew Bradley, and I am a Senior Policy Analyst for the Indiana Institute for Working Families, the only statewide program that combines research, analysis, and outreach on federal and state legislation, public policies, and programs impacting low-income working families. I also serve on the Indiana Skills2Compete Coalition, whose members include a bipartisan group of state legislators and education policymakers as well as business, workforce, and community leaders such as the Chamber of Commerce, the Department of Workforce Development (DWD), the Commission for Higher Education (CHE), and IvyTech. The aim of the Coalition is to close Indiana's skills gap and to be an available resource for policymakers working toward that end. I am here today on behalf of the Institute and the Coalition to testify regarding Senate Bill 330 and in particular the importance of an amendment that would provide the state with a study of part-time higher education students in order to act to better meet the needs of students and employers.

Senate Bill 330 addresses an important but frequently overlooked segment of Indiana's post-secondary students: adults who are returning to complete their education and gain vital degrees and middle-skill credentials that can be the gateway to productive careers and economic self-sufficiency. In 2013, the Wall Street Journal said that non-traditional students are now the majority on college campuses, with adult students making up a significant percentage of that population.¹ At the same time, more than 1.8 million Hoosiers between the ages of 18 and 65 have no post-secondary education at all, meaning that Indiana's adult workforce faces a significant gap in the skills necessary for today's competitive job market. In addition, the Skills2Compete Coalition has found that 65 percent of Indiana's projected workforce of 2025 were already adults in 2010, meaning that measures like SB 330 are vital in addressing adults if we realistically expect to fill Indiana's skills gap.²

In addition to adult students, another part of the 'new majority' identified by the Wall Street Journal are part-time students, including those who are returning for middle-skill training and credentials at Indiana's community colleges. But while nearly half of all college and university students in Indiana are enrolled part-time, these students are currently only eligible for 2.1

¹ Casselman, B. (2013, July 6) Number of the Week: 'Non-Traditional' Students Are Majority on College Campuses. *The Wall Street Journal*

² Indiana Skills2Compete Coalition, *Indiana's Forgotten Middle-Skill Jobs: 2013*, www.incap.org/inSkills-report.html

percent of the state's financial aid. And because 82 percent of adult students attend college part time, the disconnect between the new reality of Indiana's post-secondary population and how the state supports their education and training has broad implications for our state workforce and, by extension, the state's economic well-being.

Therefore, to magnify the impact of this bill, the intersection of Indiana's adult and part-time student populations should be carefully studied. A potential amendment could direct CHE to produce a study of part-time students, analyzing the number of students who attend part time, the amount of state and federal financial aid they receive, their demographics, and their barriers to completing higher education degrees. The results of this study would enable state government through the Governor and the General Assembly to better know the needs of these students and be able to connect them to the high-wage, high-demand jobs that Indiana's employers need in order to remain economically competitive.

Thank you for your attention to this issue, and to the needs addressed in the bill and the potential amendment.