Dear President Obama,

I am writing you to ask that you please give Wesley Lee's and SARCA's request to apply directly to the federal government for Even Start funding for the City of Poughkeepsie a favorable decision. Even Start funding supports an important literacy agency in our city: Poughkeepsie Family Literacy.

I am a student at Marist College, where I am heavily involved in literacy work. I have seen the immense need for literacy programs within our own small college community of around 5,000. The need outside of our college walls is even greater and Poughkeepsie cannot afford to see more programs and funding disappear.

Homelessness is another issue that is becoming more visible in Poughkeepsie and literacy is intimately connected with homelessness and poverty levels. The National Institute for Literacy estimates that 43% of people with only Level 1 literacy live in poverty, whereas only 4% of those with the highest literacy levels live in poverty.

Literacy begins to affect people almost as soon as they are born. The number of words that a child hears growing up can affect their likelihood of attending college or committing a crime. A child needs to enter school with at least 3,000 vocabulary words in order to succeed. However, a child from a low income family usually only knows about 900 words by the time they enter school.

Dynamic and interactive family literacy programs, like those at Poughkeepsie Family Literacy, can really change the future of an entire family. Parents and children are educated simultaneously, sometimes through interactive lessons. Parents and children can help each other as they learn and practice English with each other. The parents have more opportunities to advance at work and children will feel more comfortable at school as their literacy skills improve. Family literacy programs replace the isolation of illiteracy with an atmosphere of support and community.

Poughkeepsie is the perfect place for family literacy programs and it is crucial that programs, like Poughkeepsie Family Literacy, are allowed to continue. Poughkeepsie is seeing an increase in low income families, especially families with Latin American backgrounds. The literacy needs here
are growing and the programs that support these new community members should at least be maintained, not scaled back.

That is why I am asking again for you to please give Wesley Lee's and SARCA's request to apply directly to the federal government for Even Start funding, for the City of Poughkeepsie, a favorable decision.

Thank you,

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