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## Literacy group wants state education budget to include helping adults

By Samantha Manning

**SANTA FE, N.M.** — Gov. Susana Martinez wants to spend half of the state budget to help children in grades K through 12 improve their reading skills, but a nonprofit group said that kids aren't the only ones who need the help – adults should be targeted too.

The NM Coalition for Literacy said that around 700,000 adults in New Mexico could benefit from literacy services.

"It's a vicious cycle that's been going on for quite some time," spokesperson for the NM Coalition for Literacy Lewis Lamar said.

The cycle is when illiterate kids become illiterate adults, who then have children who also struggle to read.

Lamar said that combating adult illiteracy goes hand in hand with helping improve reading skills for children.

Lamar said while the governor's plan to give every first-grader in the state their own book is a positive step in the right direction, it won't help much if the parent can't read it to them.

"I can't imagine how that kid may feel or that parent may feel because they can't necessarily help that child further their education," Lamar said.

Lamar said that the problem all comes down to the dollars and cents.

The group said that the budget was cut to zero last year and that's why Lamar said that he wants part of the \$97 million for education to go toward helping adults.

"If she could at least put 20 percent of it towards helping adults, it can help our communities tremendously," Lamar said.

Martinez, meanwhile, said that her plans to stop promoting third-graders who aren't reading at grade level will help adults down the line because it tackles the issue at the ground level.

"That's what we're trying to avoid is to have this larger population of people that can't read as adults," Martinez said.

The literacy group has written to legislators requesting an increase in their budget for the next fiscal year.

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