



October 21, 2011

The Honorable Harold Rogers  
Appropriations Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Norm Dicks  
Appropriations Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Dennis Rehberg  
Labor-HHS-Ed Subcommittee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Labor-HHS-Ed Subcommittee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Dicks, Chairman Rehberg and Ranking Member DeLauro:

On behalf of the nation's 1,200 community colleges and their CEOs and trustees, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACCT) and the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) are writing to express strong concern about several provisions included in the House draft FY 2012 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee bill. In particular, proposed eligibility changes to the Pell Grant program and significant cuts to workforce training programs and higher education institutional aid will negatively impact community college students.

Enrolling approximately 45 percent of all U.S. undergraduates, community colleges represent the largest sector of higher education and serve the highest percentages of first-generation, low-income, and minority students.

Community colleges strongly support the Pell Grant program, which each year enables more than 3 million of our financially needy students to pay for tuition, books, transportation, and living expenses. While we recognize the severe financial challenges the Pell Grant program has experienced over the past few years, the House draft bill adversely impacts community college students.

We oppose the House draft's elimination of awards for less than half-time students, students who are currently eligible for less than 10 percent of the maximum grant, and students without a high school diploma or GED. Of the more than 108,000 students enrolled less than half-time who receive Pell Grants, half are enrolled at community colleges. Approximately 100,000 students at two-year public colleges do not have a high school diploma or GED. These Pell eligibility changes would produce little savings to the overall Pell Grant program, but would disproportionately impact community college students.

Furthermore, changes to the income protection allowance (IPA), expected family contribution (EFC), and definition of allowable income will adversely impact working poor and nontraditional students. Over three-quarters of the community college students currently receiving Pell Grant awards also

work in order to support themselves and their families while attending school. Considering the fact that nearly 80 percent of Pell Grant recipients attending community colleges have family incomes of less than 150 percent of the federal poverty line, changes to EFC and the definition of allowable income to include means tested benefits, refundable tax credits, and untaxed Social Security benefits will either eliminate or lower Pell Grant awards for millions of low-income and working community college students over the next decade.

With cuts to state and local funding, the availability of federal student aid has been a significant factor in many of our institutions' ability to maintain affordability. However, community colleges also are less likely than other institutions to be able to make up for these proposed reductions in Pell Grant awards with other types of institutional support. This leaves students with higher debt and limited options to obtain critical education and training needed to provide the skilled workforce for local businesses.

Additionally, AACC and ACCT are concerned about substantial proposed cuts to institutional aid programs in the House draft bill. More than 100 community colleges also are Hispanic-Serving Institutions, the majority of Predominately Black Institutions are two-year colleges, and community colleges also rely on funding under the Asian American Pacific Islander Institutions, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions, Native American-Serving Nontribal Institutions, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and Tribal Colleges programs. With a combined 41 percent reduction in funding for Minority Serving Institutions and Historically Black Colleges and Universities, this cut would pose a considerable challenge for our institutions serving these disadvantaged and historically marginalized populations.

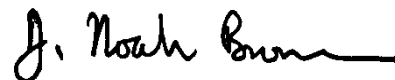
We also oppose the bill's \$2.2 billion in cuts to Department of Labor workforce development programs. The proposal to shift these programs from program year to fiscal year funding is not only counterintuitive operationally, but is also likely to lead to substantial, permanent cuts in these vital programs.

We thank you for your consideration and look forward to working with you on this and other fiscal issues impacting our nation's community colleges and their students.

Sincerely,



Walter G. Bumphus  
AACC President and CEO



J. Noah Brown  
ACCT President and CEO