AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES
ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRUSTEES

November 3, 2011

The Honorable Sherrod Brown
U.S. Senate
713 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
U.S. House of Representatives
2413 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator Brown and Congresswoman DeLauro:

On behalf of the nation's 1,200 community colleges and their CEOs and trustees, the American Association of Community Colleges and the Association of Community College Trustees would like to thank you for supporting our institutions through the introduction of the Fix America's Schools Today (FAST) Act of 2011. The proposed $5 billion in funding for community college modernization within the FAST Act would have an immense impact on our colleges and students, while generating jobs and spurring local economies.

Community college attendance continues to grow, increasing by more than 1.6 million credit students over the last decade. This is far more than any other sector in higher education, and widespread cuts in state and local funding have placed an extraordinary strain on our colleges. One consequence of this budget situation is that many colleges are foregoing infrastructure upgrades, retrofitting and other capital expenditures as they struggle to meet immediate student needs. Many community college facilities are over 50 years old, and therefore lack the space or technology needed to train the burgeoning number of students in high-demand and high-growth industries.

Collectively there is an estimated, and staggering, $100 billion of unmet need for community college infrastructure and related capital costs. The benefits of $5 billion in federal support are enormous. In the short term, federal funding to support two-year community and technical college capital will temporarily invigorate local construction business, which would serve job-starved communities. In the long term, this funding will prepare community colleges to produce workers in the key industries of the future, such as alternative energy technologies and health care, for which our colleges prepare more than half of all new workers. Given the immense backlog of projects on our campuses, facilities funds can be obligated and then spent in short order.

Recent analysis by the Economic Modeling Specialists, Inc. (EMSI) indicates that a $5 billion investment in modernization of community college facilities would generate a total impact of 81,988 jobs.

In most places, the local community college is the center of postsecondary education, job training and economic vitality. Unfortunately, community colleges are not in a position to keep up with increased growth demands and maintain their infrastructures solely with tuition and

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other state and local funding. At a time when our nation is seeking solutions to its economic problems, community colleges educate and train students of all ages and backgrounds to reach their potential and can help our country renew its economic strength. This investment in our institutions will help the economy in the short-term, while laying the groundwork for long-term economic growth and stability.

Thank you for introducing the FAST Act of 2011. The American Association of Community Colleges and the Association of Community College Trustees support your efforts and urge consideration of this legislation in the House and Senate.

Sincerely,

Walter G. Bumphus
AACC President and CEO

J. Noah Brown
ACCT President and CEO

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