

November 13, 2015

The Honorable Harold Rogers  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Chairman  
Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Member  
Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Rogers and Cole and Ranking Members Lowey and DeLauro:

On behalf of the nation's more than 1,100 community colleges, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) and the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) request your continued support for essential programs that create higher education opportunity and prepare the nation's workforce.

We want to reiterate our support for the following priorities, with consideration to the revised subcommittee allocations for FY 2016. Resources dedicated to these programs are investments in a better-educated workforce and citizenry, which will more than pay for themselves through economic and other dividends.

AACC and ACCT urge you to consider the following priorities for FY 2016:

#### **The Federal Pell Grant Program**

Pell Grants are essential to helping low-income students access and complete higher education. Each year nearly 9 million students -- 3.3 million community college students -- rely on the program to help pay for tuition, books, fees, transportation, and living expenses. Both the House and Senate Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations bills removed approximately \$300 million in temporary surplus program funds to support other programs. With the additional resources at its discretion, Congress should restore these cuts and appropriate the FY 15 level of \$22.475 billion. This would allow for a \$5,915 maximum grant next July 1, and help stabilize the program, which is projected to return to shortfalls in the coming years.

#### **Adult Basic and Literacy Education State Grants**

AACC and ACCT remain very concerned about the still largely unrestored sequester cuts to the Adult Basic and Literacy Education State Grants (ABE) program. This program was reauthorized as part of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which established new authorization levels. We call on Congress to fund this program at the level that it felt appropriate when it passed WIOA by overwhelming margins - \$622.3 million. At the least, the state grants program should be increased by \$26 million to its pre-sequester level of \$595 million, and national leadership activities should be maintained at \$13.7 million. ABE grants help serve 1.8 million participants each year in gaining reading, numeracy and English literacy, and GED preparation. Demand for these programs, however, far outstrips supply, as tens of thousands of individuals remain on waitlists for services. A recent report from OECD on a survey of adult skills showed that 36 million Americans, or one in six adults, lack basic literacy and numeracy skills. We cannot hope to

raise our workforce's educational attainment to the levels demanded by the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy without adequately addressing the needs of this population.

**HEA Title III-A, Strengthening Institutions:** The Strengthening Institutions program provides vital support to under-resourced institutions, primarily community colleges, to help them carry out their educational missions. The program helps eligible institutions to become self-sufficient and expand their capacity to serve low-income students by providing funds to improve and strengthen their academic quality, institutional management, and fiscal stability. This support has become increasingly crucial as state support for public higher education has diminished. Community colleges call on Congress to provide \$85 million for this program in FY 16.

#### **Perkins Career and Technical Education (CTE) Programs**

The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act programs are the largest ongoing source of federal institutional support for community colleges, helping them to improve all aspects of cutting-edge CTE programs. The Perkins Basic State Grants give postsecondary institutions the flexibility to identify local priorities and to fund innovation in occupational education programs. Community colleges use these grants to improve programs that prepare students for high-skill, in-demand fields by helping them meet challenging academic, vocational, and technical standards; improve curricula; purchase the equipment students need to know how to use in today's jobs; integrate vocational and academic instruction; and foster better links between colleges and the business community. We urge Congress to restore this program to at least its FY 2012 level.

#### **Strengthen Workforce Development**

It is essential that we provide workers with job training programs they need in the changing economy. Continued funding for the federal workforce system is a priority for community colleges in order to maintain access and build programs for training workers. After enactment of WIOA, Congress increased its investments in many of these programs, though they still remain well below their FY 10 levels and the authorization levels noted above. We urge you to continue the upward trend in these investments to match the authorized funding levels in the coming years.

#### **Other Important Funding Priorities**

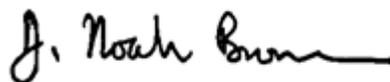
Community colleges strongly support Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants, Federal Work Study, and the National Science Foundation Advanced Technological Education (ATE) program, and request at least level funding for these programs. Funding increases were included in the 2016 House bill for Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education for the following programs: Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs), Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions, the TRIO and GEAR UP programs. We support these increases and request they be included in the FY 2016 omnibus bill. Additionally, we remain concerned about sustained cuts to the Child Care Access Means Parents in School Program, and request consideration for restored funding.

These investments in our education and workforce system are vital to our nation's economic prosperity and thus also vital to the health of the federal budget over time. We urge you to keep those considerations in mind when allocating resources for the FY 2016 omnibus bill.

Sincerely,



Walter G. Bumphus  
AACC President and CEO



J. Noah Brown  
ACCT President and CEO