

July 23, 2013

The Honorable Patty Murray
United States Senate
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Al Franken
United States Senate
309 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Murray and Senator Franken:

On behalf of America's community college leadership, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) and the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) we write to express our strong support for your amendment to S. 1334, the Bipartisan Student Loan Certainty Act of 2013. The Murray-Franken amendment addresses two essential priorities for community colleges: fiscal support for the Pell Grant program, and restoration of Pell Grant and Title IV eligibility for Ability-to-Benefit students.

Community colleges play an essential role in meeting our labor market's demand for skilled workers with postsecondary credentials. There are currently 3.7 million job openings in the United States, and many are vacant due to a deficit of skilled workers. By 2018, it is expected that nearly two-thirds of all jobs will require some type of postsecondary credential.

One way community colleges address this skills gap and related educational needs is by providing education and training programs to students who lack a high school diploma or GED. Eligibility under Ability-to-Benefit (ATB) has assisted these students attain their educational goals through access to federal student aid. As of July 1st 2012, new ATB students no longer qualified for Pell or other Title IV student aid. The new policy has prevented thousands of community college students from gaining financial assistance for higher education.

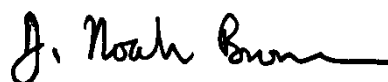
Pell Grants are essential to the educational aspirations of millions of college students. Of those, ATB students face some of the greatest needs and barriers towards completion. Many community colleges have put into place innovative programs and pathways to address their unique needs, whereby individuals co-enrolled in developmental skills courses and job training programs. The Murray-Frank amendment includes partial restoration of Pell Grant and Title IV eligibility for ATB students who are participating in career-pathway programs.

Additionally, the Murray-Frank amendment uses the remainder of savings generated from the underlying bill to support funding for the Pell Grant program. This is an important step towards eliminating the program's estimated shortfall in fiscal year 2015. Since savings generated by S. 1334 come from the federal student loan program, we believe it is important to reinvest those dollars back into our student population. We strongly support this amendment, and thank you for your dedication.

Sincerely,



Walter G. Bumphus
AACC President and CEO



J. Noah Brown
ACCT President and CEO

Signed on behalf of:

American Association of Community Colleges
Association of Community College Trustees

Alabama Community College System
Arkansas Association of Two-Year Colleges
California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office
Community College League of California
Colorado Community College System
Delaware Technical and Community College
Association of Florida Colleges
The University of Hawaii System
Illinois Community College Board
Illinois Community College Trustees Association
Iowa Association of Community College Trustees
Kansas Association of Community College Trustees
Kentucky Community and Technical College System
Maryland Association of Community Colleges
Maryland Higher Education Commission
Massachusetts Community Colleges
Michigan Community College Association
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities
Mississippi Community College Board
Missouri Community College Association
Montana University System
Nebraska Community College Association
Community College System of New Hampshire
New Jersey Council of County Colleges
New Mexico Association of Community Colleges
New York Community College Trustees
The State University of New York
North Carolina Association of Community College Trustees
North Carolina Community College System
Ohio Association of Community Colleges
Oregon Community College Association
Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges
South Carolina Technical College System
The Tennessee Board of Regents
Texas Association of Community Colleges
Vermont State Colleges
Virginia Community College System
Washington State Board of Community and Technical Colleges
Washington Trustees Association of Community and Technical Colleges
West Virginia Council for Community and Technical College Education
Wisconsin Technical College District Boards Association
Wisconsin Technical College System
Wyoming Association of Community College Trustees
Wyoming Community College Commission