

June 1, 2017

The Honorable Mazie Hirono
US Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Susan Davis
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray
US Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bobby Scott
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Hirono, Senator Murray, Congresswoman Davis, and Congressman Scott:

On behalf of the nation's 1,108 community colleges, including their presidents and boards of trustees, we write to commend you on the introduction of the Pell Grant Preservation and Expansion Act. We support this legislation. This bill includes many community college priorities for the Pell Grant program, which is by far the most important federal program for community colleges students, with nearly 3 million students receiving a Pell Grant each year.

This bill would ensure fiscal stability for the Pell Grant program by shifting funding entirely to mandatory spending. This would provide students and their families with helpful predictability about the availability of assistance in paying for college. The Pell Grant program essentially operates as an entitlement program, and making funding mandatory spending would safeguard the program from funding shortfalls. Previously, shortfalls have resulted in harmful cuts to student eligibility.

Additionally, the bill would increase the Pell Grant maximum award and continue yearly inflationary increases. This is extremely important since the cost of attending community college continues to be a significant barrier for many students. While the average tuition and fees for a full-time undergraduate student at a community college is \$3,520, the average total costs of full-time attendance is \$17,000. Increasing the maximum Pell Grant award will help our neediest students attend college while relying less on borrowing.

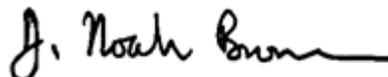
The Pell Grant Preservation and Expansion Act also includes an increase to the lifetime eligibility for the Pell Grant program from 12 to 14 semesters. This is a longstanding priority for community colleges. It is particularly important for our students who subsequently transfer to four-year institutions. The bill would also provide Pell Grant access to eligible students in certain short-term training programs. Both students and employers would benefit greatly from this assistance, and we look forward to working with Congressional leaders to further refine and advance this proposal.

Thank you for the introduction of this important piece of legislation. We wholeheartedly endorse your efforts and look forward to working with you to enact these priorities as Congress reauthorizes the Higher Education Act.

Sincerely,



Walter G. Bumphus
AACCC President and CEO



J. Noah Brown
ACCT President and CEO