

July 6, 2017

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
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 Frelinghuysen 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.

Federal investments in student aid and institutional support are essential to our institutions' mission to educate the citizenry, prepare workers for better jobs, and provide a myriad of services to local communities. Research has repeatedly shown that these investments pay dividends in the form of increased tax revenue, lower social services spending, and heightened civic engagement. We hope that the committee will, before the year is out, have at its disposal more resources to dedicate to these programs through an increased cap on non-defense discretionary spending. The top community college federal funding priorities for FY 18 include:

The Federal Pell Grant Program

Pell Grants are the most important form of financial aid for community colleges students, helping more than 2.8 million of them access and succeed in higher education each year. Congress took a dramatic step to improve the program in FY 17 by reinstating year-round Pell Grants, for which we are very appreciative. In FY 18, the program's current appropriation should be maintained, and the Pell Grant reserve should be protected. All reserve funds should be kept in the Pell Grant program, and used for purposes such as indexing the maximum grant award to inflation or funding short-term training programs not currently eligible for support. Diversion of the reserve to finance other programs threatens the future stability of the program and the ability of millions of students to succeed in college.

Support Under-Resourced Institutions and Students

The Higher Education Act Strengthening Institutions Program (Title III-A) helps colleges become self-sufficient and expand their capacity to serve low-income students, by providing funds to improve and strengthen the academic quality, institutional management, and fiscal stability of eligible institutions. A majority of program funds are received by community colleges. Funds may be used for planning, faculty development, establishing endowments, and other purposes. Administrative management, and the development and improvement of academic programs also are supported. Many recent grantees have focused on improving student completion rates, and priority is given to evidence-based proposals. The program is eliminated in the administration's budget, but Congress should at least maintain its current funding levels.

Help Parents Attend College

The Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) program supports the participation of low-income parents in postsecondary education through campus-based child care services. Multi-year grants are awarded through a competitive process to institutions of higher education that enroll large numbers of Pell Grant recipients. In addition to campus-based child care for infants and toddlers, the program also funds before- and after-school care for older children and parenting classes. It is eliminated in the administration's budget proposal. We ask that the committee maintain current support for this important program.

Perkins Career and Technical Education Programs

The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (CTE) 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 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 reject the administration's proposed cut to this program and restore this program to at least its FY 2012 level.

Strengthen Workforce Development and Adult Basic Education

Federal workforce education programs are needed to help individuals navigate the changing economy. Millions of jobs are currently unfilled because businesses cannot find workers with the skills they need. The best opportunity for displaced workers is to augment their skills and education to meet these needs. This reality is in conflict with the administration's proposed cuts of approximately 40% to the core programs authorized by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, which passed Congress on an overwhelmingly bipartisan basis. Funding for these programs should be at least maintained at current levels.

Adult Basic Education State Grants help serve 1.8 million participants each year to gain reading, numeracy and English literacy, and GED preparation. However, demand for these programs far outstrips supply, as tens of thousands of individuals remain on waitlists for services. We request that funding for this program is restored to at least its FY 2012 level.

Additional Funding Priorities for Community Colleges

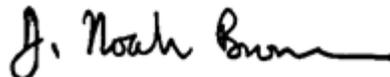
Community colleges strongly support Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants, Federal Work Study, international education, the federal TRIO and GEAR UP programs, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs), Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions, and other programs supporting Minority Serving Institutions and Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Cuts to these programs could have a devastating impact on student access and success. Hence, we ask for at least level funding for these programs.

We thank you for your consideration, and look forward to working with the committee during the FY 18 appropriations process.

Sincerely,



Walter G. Bumphus
AACC President and CEO



J. Noah Brown
ACCT President and CEO