



March 29, 2021

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Vice Chairman
Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairwoman
Labor, HHS and Education Subcommittee

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Ranking Member
Labor, HHS and Education Subcommittee

Dear Chairman Leahy, Vice Chairman Shelby, Chairwoman Murray, and Ranking Member Blunt:

On behalf of the nation's 1,050 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 increase access to higher education opportunities 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 support local communities. Research has repeatedly shown that these investments generate dividends in the form of increased tax revenue, lower social services spending, and heightened civic engagement.

There is growing recognition that immediate and robust federal action is needed to help American workers and increase our economic growth. Strong investment in the programs mentioned below is an essential part of this undertaking.

AACC and ACCT are members of the Student Aid Alliance and the Coalition to Invest in America's Workforce, and as such support their appropriations requests. Community college funding priorities for FY 2022 include:

The Federal Pell Grant Program

We strongly urge Congress to double the Pell Grant maximum award via mandatory and/or discretionary spending. Pell Grants are the most important form of financial aid for community college students, helping nearly 2.2 million access and succeed in higher education each year. The time has come for Congress to make a historic investment in this crucial program. While community colleges offer the lowest tuitions of the major higher education sectors, the average annual cost of attendance for a community college is over \$18,000, so a doubled grant is of



great benefit to our students, who are disproportionately economically disadvantaged. Should an outright doubling of the Pell Grant not be possible immediately, we urge you to increase the maximum award by at least \$625 in FY 22, to \$8,020. This is the same increase that is included in the College Affordability Act.

Additionally, all reserve funds should be kept in the Pell Grant program. Diverting these funds to finance other programs undermines the program's future financial stability and the ability of millions of students to succeed in college.

Strengthening Community College Training Grants

Community colleges are deeply appreciative to Congress for creating the Strengthening Community College Training Grants (SCCTG) in the FY 2020 appropriations bill and increasing funding for the program in FY 2021. SCCTG will provide direct support for expanded workforce training capacity at our institutions, in a similar vein as the Community-Based Job Training Grants and the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College to Career Training grants that came before it. Applications for the program in its first year far outstripped available funds, even during the pandemic. Accordingly, we recommend increasing funding for the program to \$125 million in FY 2022, which would fund up to three times as many grants.

Support Under-Resourced Institutions and Students

The Higher Education Act Strengthening Institutions Program (Title III-A) helps community colleges and other institutions serve low-income students by providing funds to improve academic quality, institutional management, and fiscal stability. Funds may be used for planning, faculty development, establishing endowments, and other purposes. Title III-A also supports improvements in administration and academic programs, and many recent grantees have focused on improving student completion rates. We urge you to increasing funding for this program to \$135 million in FY 2022.

Perkins Career and Technical Education

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 improve all aspects of cutting-edge CTE programs. Community colleges use Perkins 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 make a significantly increased investment in this program.

Strengthen Workforce Development and Adult Basic Education

Federal workforce education programs authorized by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) are needed to help individuals navigate the changing economy. Before the pandemic, record



numbers of jobs were unfilled because businesses could not find workers with needed skills. This skills gap was exacerbated by the pandemic and the millions of workers who have lost jobs during the pandemic that are not coming back.

The best opportunity for displaced workers is to augment their skills with education to meet these needs. Adult Basic Education State Grants help serve 1.8 million participants each year to gain reading, numeracy and English literacy, and GED preparation. Demand for these programs far outstrips supply, as tens of thousands of individuals remain on waitlists for services. We recommend at least \$750 million for the ABE State Grants and strong increases for the other WIOA programs.

Additional Funding Priorities for Community Colleges

Community colleges strongly support Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants, Federal Work Study, international education, TRIO and GEAR UP programs, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Predominantly Black Institutions, Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions, and other programs supporting Minority Serving Institutions and Historically Black Colleges and Universities. The SAA request, which we support, encompasses some of these programs. We urge robust increases for the others.

We thank you for your consideration and look forward to working with the committee during the FY 2022 appropriations process.

Sincerely,

Walter G. Bumphus, Ph.D.
President and CEO, AACC

J. Noah Brown
President and CEO, ACCT