



September 30, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
H-232 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi:

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) thank you for your leadership in introducing a revised version of the HEROES Act (HEROES 2). HEROES 2, like its predecessor, would provide much needed assistance to our colleges as they work to promote student success amid the pandemic.

We are encouraged that the legislation continues to provide resources to community colleges through the State Education Stabilization Fund and are grateful for the use of a headcount formula to distribute these funds to public institutions. This more equitable approach to distributing aid will better assist under-resourced institutions and the financially needy students they serve.

As our colleges begin the fall semester, however, it has become increasingly clear that ongoing expenses and revenue losses greatly exceed the amount of relief provided in HEROES 2. Fall enrollment drops ranging from 5-15%, substantial state budget cuts, increased costs stemming from the transition to distance education, and COVID-19 mitigation efforts are just some of the challenges our members face. As a result, our associations recently signed a higher education community letter calling for \$120 billion for colleges and universities. We hope that, as the bill moves forward, the amount of aid allocated to higher education institutions through the State Education Stabilization Fund can be increased significantly. We also ask that dedicated workforce training funds for community colleges be considered for inclusion, as our institutions will play a vital part in the economic recovery.

We applaud the aid provided for states and local areas, as it will help counteract drastic state budget cuts that could hinder the long-term ability of our institutions to provide good quality, affordable education to all. These funds, along with the state maintenance-of-effort provisions included in the measure will likely soften the impact of collapsing state finances on our institutions.

We appreciate the bill's clarification of student eligibility for pandemic-related emergency aid, which will enable colleges to provide much-needed assistance to all students, including international students, DACA recipients, Dreamers, and others. The bill also allows institutions to use stabilization funds much more flexibly and effectively, than those provided through the CARES Act. This is a notable and much needed improvement.



As you know, many community college students face financial challenges that will likely last beyond this pandemic. Therefore, we support the bill's extension of student loan borrower relief provided in the CARES Act through September 2021. This will help students as they navigate the economy and launch or continue their careers. Our students will also benefit greatly knowing that any emergency grants they receive as a result of the pandemic will not be taxed and will not count against their future financial aid. The additional support for childcare will also ensure that student parents are not forced to leave their academic programs as a result of the pandemic.

In addition, we greatly appreciate the increased financial assistance provided to colleges through the Title III and Title V programs, along with allocation requirements that will effectively distribute funds. These programs are an efficient way of targeting assistance on colleges that serve high percentages of diverse and financially needy student populations, with fewer resources than other institutions.

We look forward to continuing to work with you as this legislation moves forward and on any future COVID-19 legislation. Thank you for your leadership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Walter G. Bumphus'.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'J. Noah Brown'.

J. Noah Brown
President and CEO, ACCT