



March 29, 2023

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairwoman
Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Susan Collins
Vice Chair
Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Robert Tammy Baldwin
Chairwoman
Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Ranking Member
Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee

Re.: Community College Federal Funding Priorities

Dear Chair Murray, Vice Chair Collins, and Ranking Members Collins and Capito:

On behalf of the nation's 1,038 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 higher education access and success 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.

Community colleges offer a broad spectrum of educational offerings for a wide variety of students. Some are starting an academic career that will lead to a four-year degree and beyond, while others seek industry-recognized credentials to immediately better their prospects in the workplace. Many students come to our institutions needing support beyond our academic programs, including basic skills education, childcare, and other supportive services. Serving all these students well is instrumental to their personal success, as well as the strength and vitality of the American economy and society. 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 support their appropriations requests. Community college funding priorities for FY 2024 include:

The Federal Pell Grant Program

We strongly urge Congress to increase the Pell Grant maximum award to \$13,000 – double the FY 21 award - via mandatory and/or discretionary spending. The time has come for Congress to make a

historic investment in this crucial program. While community colleges offer the lowest tuition by far of the major higher education sectors, the costs of living bring the average annual cost of attendance for a community college is over \$18,000. This makes a doubling of the grant hugely beneficial to our students, who have lower incomes, on average, than students in other sectors. If doubling the Pell Grant is not possible immediately, we urge you to increase the discretionary maximum award by at least \$750 in FY 24.

Strengthening Community College Training Grants

Community colleges strongly support the Strengthening Community College Training Grant (SCCTG) program, which was funded at \$65 million in FY 23. SCCTG provides direct support for expanded workforce training capacity at our institutions, so they can meet the demand for skilled workers in industries nationwide. Since applications for the program have far outstripped available funds, a substantial investment in this program is warranted. Accordingly, we recommend increasing funding for the program to \$100 million in FY 2024.

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 increasing student completion. We urge you to fund this program at \$210 million in FY 2024.

Accelerated Success: Free Community College

Community colleges have long supported a Federal-State partnership to make postsecondary education affordable and accessible to all by covering tuition costs for students attending community colleges. We commend the President's budget proposal calling for a discretionary program that moves us in that direction by allowing eligible students enrolled in eligible programs up to two years of free community college. Recent federal investments in infrastructure and manufacturing will lead to an increase demand of workers in those industries and community colleges are poised to provide the skill-ready workforce if barriers to entry such as costs can be lowered. We urge you to fund the new Accelerated Success: Free Community College at \$500 million in FY 2024.

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 of at least 10% above the FY 23 appropriation.

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. The best opportunity for displaced and economically disadvantaged workers is to augment their skills with education. Adult Basic Education State Grants help serve 1.8 million participants each year to gain reading, numeracy, English literacy, and GED preparation. We recommend at least \$790 million for the ABE State Grants and strong increases for the other WIOA programs.

Additional Funding Priorities for Community Colleges

We strongly support \$165 million for Postsecondary Student Success Grants and \$32 million for the Basic Needs Grants within the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE). Affordable childcare is also essential to increasing student retention and completion, so we urge Congress to fund the Child Care Access Means Parents in School program at \$110 million in FY 24 and retain the provision from the FY 23 appropriations bill that lifted the statutory cap on program grants.

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 Student Aid Alliance 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 2024 appropriations process.

Sincerely,



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



Jee Hang Lee
ACCT President and CEO