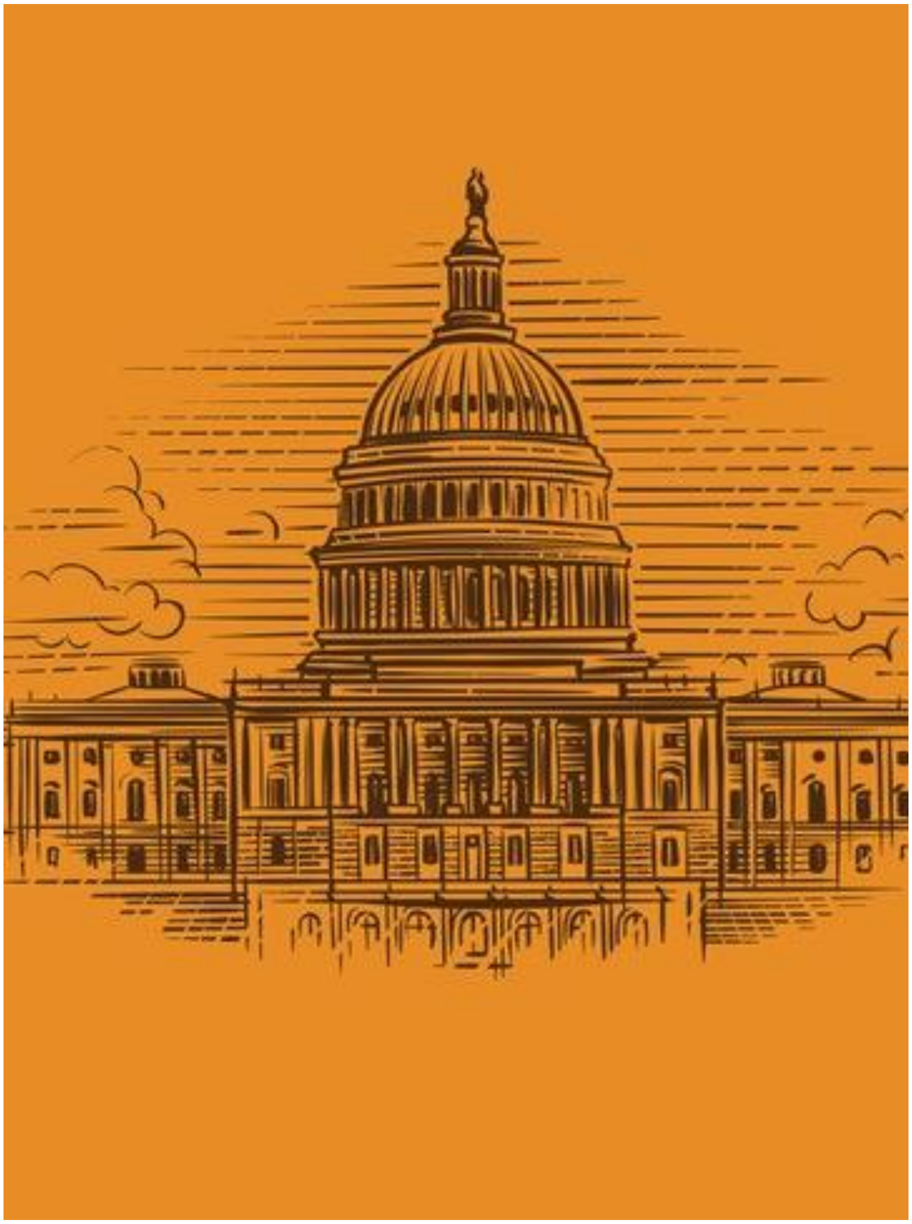
Community College NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE SUMMIT



COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES BACKGROUND BRIEFING INFORMATION

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BOLSTER THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Supporting community colleges in the workforce development is a long-standing priority for community college leaders. In particular, the focus on workforce development is also a top priority of both parties currently given the expanding number of middle-skill jobs to be filled and the necessity to have an education beyond high school for family sustaining wages. The following priorities fall under the jurisdiction of Congressional authorizing committees – the House Education and Workforce Committee and the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee.

Support Workforce Pell Grants for Students in Short Term Programs

The end of 2023 saw a significant development in the long campaign to enact legislation to extend Pell Grant eligibility to students in shorter-term workforce education programs. On December 12, the House Committee on Education and the Workforce approved the Bipartisan Workforce Pell Act (BWPA, H.R. 6585). The bill is a product of months-long negotiations between Republican and Democratic staffers and members on the committee. The bill's sponsor, Elise Stefanik (R-NY), is joined by original cosponsors Virginia Foxx (R-NC) and Bobby Scott (D-VA), the committee's top Republican and Democrat, respectively. Rep. Mark DeSaulnier (D-CA) was also an original cosponsor.

The bill combines, and in many cases modifies, elements of three workforce Pell bills that had been previously introduced in the House. These include the bipartisan JOBS Act, the Republican-backed PELL Act, and the Democrat-supported Jobs to Compete Act.

AACC and ACCT have long endorsed the JOBS Act but also welcomed the newer bills and are encouraged about this step to forge a new, bipartisan way forward. The associations sent a letter to the committee that noted aspects positive and negative aspects of the legislation but did not endorse the bill. The bill will hopefully progress to a vote in the full House, and at that point the debate will move to the Senate. There is no Senate version of the BWPA yet, but the JOBS Act and a slightly modified version of the PELL Act have been introduced in that chamber.

Like the bills that came before it, the BWPA would make students eligible to receive workforce Pell Grants in certain programs between 150 and 599 clock hours in length that are offered over at least 8 weeks. The amount and other aspects of the grants would be determined in the same manner as Federal Pell Grants.

Students attending for-profit institutions would be eligible to receive these grants, a political point of contention that may complicate the bill's prospects in the Senate. Correspondence programs are not eligible, but there is no limitation on distance education programs.

Workforce programs would have to meet a series of new quality assurance requirements to be eligible for Pell grants, separate from and more exacting than those applied to other Title IV programs. The legislation lays out a three-step process for programs to be approved:

First, the state workforce development board must determine that the program offers an education aligned with high-skill, high-wage or in-demand occupations, employers' needs and requirements for state certification and licensure where applicable.

After that happens, the institution's accrediting agency must determine that the program either leads to a recognized postsecondary credential that is stackable to further education and portable to multiple employers, or leads to the only recognized credential for a given occupation. In any case, the program must prepare students to pursue a subsequent longer-term certificate or degree program, and they must receive academic credit in that program for what they learned in the workforce Pell program. In addition to compliance with other reporting and disclosure requirements, the accreditor must also determine that the workforce Pell program has been in existence for at least one year.

Next, the Dept. of Education must determine that the program:

- Has a verified completion rate of 70%, which includes students who complete the program within 150% of its normal time to completion.
- Have a verified job placement rate of 70%, measured 180 days after completion.
- Must not charge students more in tuition than the program's "value added earnings." This is defined as the median earnings of program completers, measured one year after completion, minus 150% of the Federal Poverty Line applicable to a single individual, adjusted to account for regional disparities.
- Must lead to median earnings of program completers, three years after completion, that are greater than the median earnings of high school graduates in the state that are in the labor force and aged 25-34. An institution may submit alternate earnings and placement data to either appeal ED's findings or establish initial program eligibility.

Program eligibility may be revoked by ED if any of the requirements in this three-step process are no longer met. ED may aggregate data from multiple years and groups of programs to generate the necessary data if individual programs are too small.

The legislation requires ED to gather certain data about eligible workforce Pell programs and publish them on the school's College Scorecard. These data include program length, earnings of completers and non-completers, completion and job placement rates, and more.

The legislation also establishes the process by which accreditors may expand the scope of their ED recognition to include the evaluation of workforce Pell programs.

The bill includes provisions that seem to prevent private institutions that are subject to the endowment tax from participating in the Federal Direct Loan programs. In addition, these institutions would also be required, as a condition of participation in the Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants program, to make emergency grants available Pell Grant Recipients that are at least as large as the maximum amount of the SEOG awards for which those students qualify.

Those institutions must also ensure that they enroll at least the same percentage of Pell-eligible students in future years as they did in the year that the Bipartisan Workforce Pell Act was enacted to continue to be eligible to participate in the SEOG program. According to the BWPA's Fact Sheet, these provisions result in savings that offset the cost of the bill.

The BWPA authorizes $40 million in the first year and $30 million in four succeeding years for ED's costs in administering the workforce Pell program. The authorization does not apply to or limit the number and amount of the grants themselves.

Talking Points:

- Short-term or Workforce Pell is a long-standing community college priority with strong bipartisan support.
- The three-tiered approval system could be onerous to colleges, but colleges support having guardrails to support program quality.
- Now is the time for Congress to leverage the movement and bipartisan support to expand access to workforce development.

Strengthen the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

The House EDW Committee also approved legislation to reauthorize the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act at its December 12 markup. Dubbed the A Stronger Workforce for America Act (SWAA, H.R. 6655), the legislation would make changes to the federal workforce development system that includes local and state workforce development boards and local one-stop job centers. The bill also authorizes the Adult Basic Education program administered by the Dept. of Education.

As with the BWPA, AACC and ACCT have communicated with the committee positive and negative aspects of the bill, without formally endorsing it. However, the positive aspects outnumber the negative.

First and foremost, the bill authorizes the Strengthening Community College Training Grants Program (slightly changing the name to the Strengthening Community College Workforce Development Grants program due to Chairwoman Foxx's dislike of the word training). SCCTG has been funded for four years as an unauthorized program, so authorization would put the program on a more solid footing. The bill's language would not fundamentally change the program as it has been administered to date: it would continue to be a DOL competitive grant program to community colleges working in partnerships with businesses and others to expand and improve their workforce education programs.

As with the other authorization levels in the bill, the authorization level for the program is set at $65 million, which is the current funded level. AACC and ACCT would prefer that level to be higher as a stronger signal of support for the program, but appropriators are free to go beyond the authorized level if they choose.

While SWAA would still require reporting on all students in a program that is on the WIOA Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL), the bill does take a solid step towards expedited inclusion of community college programs on the ETPL. All programs that qualify for "workforce Pell," if it is enacted, will automatically be included on the list. AACC and ACCT have long advocated for automatic ETPL inclusion for all community college programs, but that has met resistance on the Hill.

SWAA also emphasizes increasing the amount of training that is conducted through the federal workforce system. To that end, the bill requires that local areas use not less than 50% of the funds it receives to provide individuals with skills development, which includes training. It would also reprogram money that is generated by H1B visa fees and currently used for DOL competitive grants towards Individual Training Accounts for dislocated workers. Those workers would be guaranteed an ITA of at least $5,000 as a result.

The bill also emphasizes the use of real-time labor market information in devising workforce plans and strategies, and support for skills-based hiring. It does not require community college membership on state and local workforce development boards, but evidence suggests that community college leaders that wish to serve on these boards are usually included on them.

Talking Points:

- WIOA has not been updated for a decade and there have been major shifts in the workforce in the last ten years.
- Authorizes the Strengthening Community College Training Grants program under the name Strengthening Community College Workforce Development Grants.
- Creates a designated funding source for Individual Training Accounts (ITA) that is not subject to appropriations

FUND KEY EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE PROGRAMS

Federal funding for both colleges and students, via student aid and other support programs, is integral to the college cost calculation for institutions. For this reason, appropriations is always a top priority for community college leaders. Congress is mandated to pass a federal spending plan, known as the 12 appropriation bills, annually. The following priorities are all under the jurisdiction of the appropriations committees in each chamber.

Support Student Access and Success

Ensuring student access and success requires robust, targeted investments in federal financial aid programs. We support substantial investments in Federal Pell Grants, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (FSEOG), Federal Work-Study, TRIO, GEAR UP, Postsecondary Student Success Grants (PSSG), Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS), and the Basic Needs for Postsecondary Students program.

While Congress has made significant investments in these programs, such as the largest increase to the Federal Pell Grant program in a decade during FY23, challenges persist. The current maximum award of $7,395 falls short of covering a full-time community college student's average cost of attendance, estimated at $19,860 ($3,990 in tuition and fees and the remainder includes room and board, course materials, transportation, and other expenses). To address this gap, Congress must raise the maximum award in FY24 and commit itself to restoring the purchasing power of Pell Grants. Additionally, sustained investments in FSEOG, FWS, TRIO, GEAR UP, PSSG, CCAMPIS, and Basic Needs grants are crucial for fostering student success.

- **Federal Pell Grant**: The Federal Pell Grant is the foundation of federal financial aid serving approximately 7 million students annually, with nearly one-third of Pell Grant recipients attending community colleges. Increasing the Pell Grant maximum award, at minimum by an inflationary adjustment, and setting the long-term goal to double the Pell to $13,000 promotes affordability and student success for low-income students. It would also reduce students' need to borrow.
- **Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG):** The FSEOG program provides an additional source of grant aid for low-income students beyond Pell Grants. Funds are combined with other types of grants, loans, and work-study assistance to meet total educational expenses. Pell Grant recipients receive priority for FSEOG awards, which range from $100 to $4,000 annually. More than 613,000 community college students receive aid from the FSEOG program annually.
- **Federal Work-Study (FWS**): The Federal Work-Study program leverages resources from schools and the private sector to provide opportunities for students to earn money to pay for college. The program is also designed to encourage students receiving federal financial aid to participate in community service. In addition to providing self-help assistance to students, Federal Work Study funds help support partnerships between the federal government, postsecondary schools, students, and communities.
- **Federal TRIO programs (TRIO):** TRIO programs are outreach and student services programs designed to identify and provide services for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds. TRIO includes eight programs targeted to serve and assist low-income individuals, first-generation college students, and individuals with disabilities to progress through the academic pipeline from middle school to post-baccalaureate programs. Many community colleges receive grants for Student Support Services and Upward Bound.
- **Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP):** GEAR UP works to increase income-eligible students' academic skills, help them graduate from high school and then enroll in college. The program also helps students persist from their first year to second year of college.
- **Postsecondary Student Success Grants**: Created in the FY22 spending package, Postsecondary Student Success Grants provides funding for institutions who engage in evidence-based practices to increase retention, transfer, credit accumulation, reenrollment, and degree completion.

Community colleges are prioritized in the awarding of these competitive grants.
- **Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS):** The CCAMPIS program supports the participation of low-income parents in postsecondary education through the provision of campus-based childcare services. Childcare is essential to the academic success of thousands of community college students and has become even more essential given the lack of affordable child care options in many communities.
- **Basic Needs for Postsecondary Students Program**: The Basic Needs grant provides funding to eligible institutions of higher education (IHEs) to support programs that address the basic needs of students through systemic approaches and to report on practices that improve outcomes for students. These funds are critical as housing insecurity reached its highest reported level in 2023, food insecurity continues to harm college students.

<u>Talking Points:</u>

- Community college students benefit greatly from federal programs that help them offset costs associated with meeting their educational goals.
- Pell Grants assist low-income students with tuition and fees and other college expenses—they are an essential component of broad access to higher education.
- Increasing the maximum award helps diminish the costs of attendance for low-income students and reduces the need for borrowing.
- Programs that provide community college students with financial aid, supportive services and academic guidance are more critical to student success than ever as enrollment is still recovering post-pandemic.
- Congress should make every to maintain funding for FSEOG, FWS, TRIO, GEAR UP, PPSG, CCAMPIS, and Basic Needs programs in FY24.

Strengthen Under-Resourced Institutions

Securing increased funding for institutional aid programs, including Strengthening Institutions, Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Predominantly Black Institutions, and American Indian Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities programs, is imperative for empowering community colleges to effectively serve traditionally underrepresented student populations.

Each year, community colleges comprise a significant percentage of the institutions receiving aid through Titles III and V of the Higher Education Act (HEA). Although the programs have differences in how they are structured, they all have the goal of providing focused support to certain institutions for the purposes of enhancing the education and related services available to students. These colleges are those that receive relatively few resources and serve underrepresented or especially needy students. The funds are used for a variety of purposes but are typically focused on strengthening their educational programs or aspects of institutional operations.

Community college advocates are well-positioned to identify the programs that directly or potentially benefit their institutions most directly. These programs offer invaluable resources to support community colleges and enhance student success. It is crucial to ensure that Congress increases investments in these programs the FY24 appropriations process.

Specifically, community colleges support:

- Strengthening Institutions Program: The Strengthening Institutions Program (SIP), which is authorized in Title III, Part A of the HEA, provides institutions with limited resources who serve low-income students with grants to become more self-sufficient. These funds can be used for several purposes, including construction and maintenance, faculty development, improved student services, and to establish endowment funds. Because community colleges comprise a substantial portion of the grant recipients, advocacy for this program is especially important. Congress has boosted SIP funding in the last few years, but continued increases are key.

- Grants for Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), and Tribal Colleges: Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Asian American and Native Pacific-Islander Serving Institutions, Native American-Serving Nontribal Institutions, Predominantly Black Institutions, and Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions are all considered MSIs, which are colleges and universities that serve a large percentage of a particular student population. The threshold for eligibility varies between the programs. HBCUs and Tribal Colleges also have programs that provide grant funding based on their historical mission, but they are technically not MSIs. Increased funding for these programs in annual appropriations bills will allow more institutions and more projects to take advantage of the grants.

<u>Talking Points:</u>

- Increased investments in these programs are crucial to enhancing student success and institutional sustainability.
- Community colleges are major beneficiaries of Titles III and V aid. These programs provide vital support for low-resourced institutions serving underrepresented students.

Bolster Job Training and Career and Technical Education

Community colleges play a critical role as workforce training providers, partnering with industries to establish a workforce pipeline with the skillsets and credentials needed for the local economy. However, standing up, scaling, and modernizing in the workforce development space is a costly endeavor. Community colleges leverage the Strengthening Community College Training Grants (SCCTG), WIOA state funds, Perkins CTE, and Adult Basic Education to continue providing the highest quality career-connected education.

Additional investments are needed in all four programs to tackle the diversity of needs across regions of the country. Additionally, as the federal government prioritizes investments in key sectors such as chip manufacturing, green energy, and infrastructure, a ready-workforce will be needed to move these efforts forward and community colleges are perfectly poised to help in this endeavor – with the right federal investments in workforce development.

FOCUS STUDENT TAX POLICY ON THOSE WHO CAN BENEFIT MOST

Along with grants and loans, tax benefits are often listed as the third part of federal financial aid for students. However, the current design of the higher education tax benefits could be improved to better support community college students. The following tax issues fall under the Senate Finance Committee and the House Ways and Means Committee.

End the Taxation of Pell Grants, and Modify the AOTC & LLC

AACC and ACCT strongly support the "Tax-Free Pell Grant Act" in forthcoming tax legislation. The legislation has been introduced in both the House (H.R. 3000) and Senate (S. 2920). It is now pending in the tax-writing committees. Community colleges aim to have this included in any suitable tax vehicle, which we hope will be early in the second session of the 118th Congress.

Community colleges have long supported ending the taxation of Pell Grants. Taxing grant funds used for the non-tuition portions of student expenses is counterproductive and limits the impact of this needs-based program. The Tax-Free Pell Grant Act would make all Pell Grant funds non-taxable, a policy with targeted impact on community college students. It would also enhance student success.

The legislation would also alter the $2,500 American Opportunity Tax Credit (AOTC) to enable Pell Grant recipients who attend community colleges to receive the credit. The current eligibility formula largely precludes that— for example, families with incomes of up to $160,000 qualify for the full $2,500 credit, while low-income community college Pell Grant recipients often receive nothing. Both the taxation of community college students' Pell Grants and their frequent inability to qualify for the AOTC stems from community colleges' low tuitions.

The Tax-Free Pell Grant Act has bipartisan support in both chambers of Congress.

<u>Talking Points:</u>

- Financially needy students should not have to pay taxes on grant funds that, by law, must be used for education and related expenses. Current policy undermines the program's impact and financially penalizes students who attend low-cost institutions, particularly community colleges.
- The legislation will simplify the tax code and make it easier for low-income students to efficiently file their taxes.
- Low-income community college students need assistance as much or more than relatively affluent students paying to attend more expensive institutions and should qualify for the $2500 AOTC tax credit.
- The legislation costs relatively little but will have a large positive impact on those community college students who tend to have the hardest time financing their educations.
- Community colleges are local, affordable, and flexible. They are focused on helping individuals succeed economically in their communities or continue their education at four-year colleges. Congress should support attendance at these institutions and use the tax code as an effective way to encourage enrollment.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE INTERESTS IN THE FARM BILL

The reauthorization of the sprawling, multi-faceted Farm Bill presents an important opportunity for community colleges in 2024. While universities have been tightly stitched into the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) research activity, community colleges have not been given their due and the nation's agricultural activity has suffered as a result. Even programs designated for non-Land Grant institutions have reached very few community colleges campuses.

The Farm Bill reauthorization can benefit community college campuses in three different ways –by providing direct assistance for agriculture programs, strengthening SNAP employment and training activities, and encouraging participation in SNAP for eligible community college students.

New Support for Community Colleges

Community colleges play an extensive role in supporting agricultural activity by providing workforce training related to agribusiness, aquaculture, horticulture, precision agriculture, livestock, dairy, forest and natural resources management, viticulture and enology, renewable resources, and other areas. With new federal assistance, colleges will be able to develop, support, and scale these programs, providing high-quality opportunities for students, strengthening local industry, and bolstering the nation's agricultural output.

Community colleges support the Community College Agriculture Advancement Act (H.R. 3425, S. 1740). The bill provides an annual authorization of $20 million for new capacity building grants to enhance agriculture programs at community colleges and to encourage collaboration involving community and technical colleges, land-grant universities, and other higher education institutions. This Farm Bill proposal acknowledges the role of community colleges in assuring a pipeline of trained agricultural workers, a reliable supply of healthy foods, and the promotion of sustainable farming methods.

<u>Talking Point:</u>

- As farming and agricultural related jobs increasingly are middle skill jobs that require training, the federal government should support community colleges in the development of these programs, as they support the food supply nationwide and the economies of rural communities.

SNAP Assistance

The Farm Bill also plays a critical opportunity to support community college students through its authorization of the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program – better known as SNAP.

The upcoming Farm Bill should work to enhance opportunities provided through state-administered SNAP Employment & Training (E&T) programs. Community colleges are increasingly supporting their communities by serving as third-party providers for SNAP E&T activities. These programs help promote economic security for SNAP participants and strengthen local economies. Community colleges support the SNAP E&T Enhancements Act (H.R. 5362), which would create an income disregard for SNAP participants in subsidized work-based learning programs. This change will support program completion by preventing students from losing their SNAP access mid-program. Community colleges also support an increase to the federal grant funds provided to states to launch and scale programs.

Finally, the new Farm Bill can and should simplify SNAP eligibility and encourage uptake for community college students experiencing food insecurity. Estimates vary as to the exact extent of food insecurity on community college campuses, but without question the condition is widespread and serious. The 2020 National Postsecondary Student Aid Survey (NPSAS:20) found that 23 percent of community college students experienced “low” or “very low” food security in the last 30 days, with another 11 percent experiencing “marginal” food security. At the same time, a 2018 Government Accountability Office report found that over half of college students estimated to be eligible were not participating in the SNAP program. The gap between student need and student access to assistance is explained in part by the complicated policies governing student eligibility for SNAP benefits. While many students meet eligibility exemptions, including working more than 20 hours per week or participating in federal or state work study programs, the complexity of the rules and process depresses benefit uptake and negatively impacts both student wellbeing and student success.

To support food security for community college students, the 2024 Farm Bill should simplify SNAP access for eligible college students. Policymakers should examine the student work requirement and consider adding postsecondary education to the list of activities that can fulfill the education and training requirement in SNAP. Beyond this, policymakers should look to streamline and expand the current student exemptions to capture students most at risk of food insecurity, with an eye towards reducing complexity and increasing program participation for eligible students.

Talking Points:

- Food insecurity is a continued concern impacting college students, as documented both by private surveys and the Government Accountability Office. Students who are hungry cannot focus on their studies and may work more hours to earn money, which also impacts their persistence and success.
- Community college students have an average age of 27 and are most likely to be independent students. Further, most community college students do not live on campus nor have dining plans. This means they must pay for all food out of pocket and therefore would benefit from SNAP assistance.
- Congress should focus on streamlining the eligibility process and increasing the update of SNAP assistance for students.

PROVIDE A PATHWAY TO CITIZENSHIP FOR DREAMERS AND DACA STUDENTS

ENACT THE DREAM ACT

Despite an ever-changing political and legal landscape, community colleges remain committed to the enactment of legislation that would provide Dreamers - undocumented individuals brought to the United States as children - with a path to citizenship. While the current state of affairs in Congress creates little prospect for Congressional action, the state of limbo for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program makes it clear that a permanent solution is needed for these members of our communities.

The DACA program, first established through a 2012 memorandum, was challenged in Court by the state of Texas and several other republican attorney generals. On October 2022, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit upheld a lower court ruling that the Obama administration's DACA policy was unlawful. In preparation for this potential ruling, the Biden administration sought to legally strengthen the policy by going through a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) process to establish an official rule for DACA. However, the rule was then challenged in Courts and on September 13, 2023, the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas ruled against the new DACA rule, reasoning that it was not substantially different from the 2012 memorandum. The case is now currently back at the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals, where it will likely once again be found unlawful. The prospects for appeal beyond that – the U.S. Supreme Court – are not favorable to the Biden administration or to Dreamers. In the meantime, current DACA recipients can renew their status as the case continues to be litigated, but no new DACA applications may be approved.

Given this, the only true solution for the millions of Dreamers in the country is a legislative solution and congressional action. There are many more Dreamers that are not eligible for DACA, primarily those that were too young to apply by 2017, when applications were largely stopped by the Trump administration. However, even current bipartisan discussions in the Senate around policy reforms on the U.S.-Mexico border tied to security funding for Ukraine and Israel are leaving out a solution for Dreamers.

Dreamers are Americans in every way but official status - they were brought to this country at a young age, and many have little or no connection to their countries of origin. Community colleges educate thousands of Dreamers who are striving to attain a higher education. We urge Congress and the Biden administration to work together to provide a legislative solution for Dreamers.

STRENGTHEN ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

Having accurate information about students and their persistence and success is a necessity to inform how federal, state and local dollars are spent and how colleges design their budgets. However, the currently federal system prohibits the type of data collection that could track student success. This issue is under the jurisdiction of the House Education and Workforce Committee and the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee.

The College Transparency Act

Community colleges have long advocated for the creation of a federal student-level data network to generate accurate, meaningful data on postsecondary outcomes, including post-completion earnings.

AACC and ACCT support the bipartisan, bicameral College Transparency Act (H.R. 2030, S. 839). The Senate legislation is sponsored by Sens. Bill Cassidy (R-LA), ranking member of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, & Pensions (HELP), and Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), with 22 additional members signing on as cosponsors. The House version is sponsored by Reps. Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL) and Joe Wilson (R-SC).

A Student-Level Data Network

Current law prohibits the federal government from collecting student-level data and limits reporting to students participating in the federal financial aid programs. As a result, current data systems are duplicative, inefficient, and burdensome for colleges while also failing to generate complete, accurate, and timely information about student progress and success.

The College Transparency Act would lift the existing ban and would create a secure, privacy-protected federal student-level data network (SLDN) within the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the Department of Education’s (ED) statistical agency.

The new system would deliver a comprehensive picture of student outcomes across postsecondary education to inform students and families, institutions, employers, and policymakers. The bill has been endorsed by more than 150 organizations, representing colleges and universities, employers, workforce and community development groups, student advocacy groups, veterans, and civil rights advocates.

The College Transparency Act (CTA) and Community Colleges

While many stakeholders will benefit from the legislation, community colleges have a particular interest in CTA. The bill will strengthen community colleges by:

- **Counting all community college students.** Existing federal data systems only includes students receiving Title IV aid, leaving out more than half of all community college students. The bill will fix this by counting all students, thereby presenting a more complete picture of enrollment and success at community colleges.

- **Better capturing transfer as a measure of student success.** Transfer is a key goal of many community college students, but the current system fails to adequately account for transfer. The bill will capture transfers on a more comprehensive basis, better reflecting student and institutional success.

- **Decreasing reporting burdens.** The College Transparency Act will allow the federal government to better leverage existing data sources at federal agencies and institutional data. By decreasing federal reporting requirements and eliminating the need for overlapping state, private, and institutional collection efforts, the bill will save community colleges time and money.

- **Facilitating better alignment between program offerings and workforce demands.** Community colleges currently face enormous barriers to accessing information on how their graduates fare in the workforce. This has major implications for public policy as well as the colleges. The bill will provide complete, accurate, and timely information on post-college outcomes, including labor market outcomes and program- and institution-level earnings. Armed with this data, community colleges will be better equipped to refine program offerings, build relationships with employers, and strengthen local talent pipelines.

- **Showcasing the value of community college programs.** Community college programs deliver strong outcomes for students from all academic and personal backgrounds. By counting all students, the bill will highlight the value of community college programs to prospective students, employers, and policymakers by better capturing success for community college students, improving data on employment and earnings outcomes, and disaggregating information by key student characteristics – such as race/ethnicity, Pell Grant receipt, age, and military status.