



February 23, 2024

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the nation's 1,026 community colleges and the 10.4 million students they serve, we urge you to vote for H.R. 6585, the "Bipartisan Workforce Pell Act," (BWPA) when it is considered on the House floor. This landmark legislation will simultaneously boost our economy and enable thousands of Americans to improve their economic circumstances. We applaud and appreciate the strong support that this legislation has drawn across the political spectrum.

Community colleges have long sought extension of Pell Grant eligibility to high quality, short-term workforce programs. These locally focused institutions already offer hundreds of such programs, in fields such as health care, information technology, transportation, construction, management, and many others. Given the breadth of careers impacted, the proposal has strong support from employers as well. But many students need financial help to access these programs – even with low community college tuitions that average just \$3,990 annually. This makes enactment of the BWPA essential.

The economy badly needs the additional skills acquisition that this legislation will provide. At the end of last year, there were 9 million job openings in the U.S. By 2031, 72% of jobs will require postsecondary education or training. The impact of enacting the BWPA can be seen in [Virginia](#), where a workforce education program supporting short-term credential attainment provided the following annual average wage increases:

- Education: Average increase of \$22,737
- Healthcare: Average increase of \$10,105
- Information Technology: Average increase of \$19,139
- Skilled Trades: Average increase of \$17,190
- Welding and Manufacturing: Average increase of \$19,303

The rapidly shifting workforce will require some students who have already obtained a four-year college degree to return to community college to gain new skills offered by one of these programs. Others will enter college for the first time through a workforce program and subsequently continue their postsecondary education—an option that the bill requires. For many of these adult learners, these programs present an opportunity to reengage with the postsecondary system and allow them to reskill to gain economic upward mobility. Whatever their background, low-income students need and deserve these opportunities to better support themselves and their families.

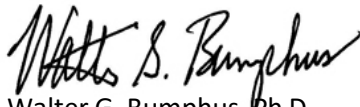
The Bipartisan Workforce Pell Act contains an extremely strict set of quality standards. These standards are far more exacting than those applied to all other federal student aid programs. To qualify for support, programs would need to meet new quantitative outcomes standards in completion, placement, and earnings; the legislation also applies existing public and private quality control mechanisms not otherwise used for federal student aid. The rigor of these standards is beyond dispute, and concerns about low-quality programs being supported by the BWPA are unwarranted.

The bill applies “risk-sharing” to a subset of institutions to offset the legislation’s cost. (Unlike an earlier version of the bill, the offset no longer denies any students access to Title IV aid.) While the proposed policy does not impact community colleges, we continue to oppose all forms of risk-sharing. Therefore, we will ask that this provision be changed when the Senate considers the legislation.

House passage of the BWPA should spur the Senate to advance legislation on this issue, leading towards final enactment. With the Bipartisan Workforce Pell Act, Congress has a rare opportunity to advance a measure that will positively impact the economy and foster economic mobility. We urge you to vote for the Bipartisan Workforce Pell Act.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



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



Jee Hang Lee
ACCT President and CEO

cc: Members of the U.S. House of Representatives