



May 3, 2024

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations &
Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Chairman
Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee

Re.: Community College Federal Funding Priorities

Dear Chairs Cole and Aderholt and Ranking Member DeLauro:

On behalf of the nation's 1,026 community colleges, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) and the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) request your continued support for 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 Americans 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 jumpstart their workplace prospects. Many students come to our institutions needing support beyond our academic programs, including basic skills education, childcare, and other support services. Serving all these students well is instrumental to their personal success and to the strength of the American economy and society. Robust 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 2025 include:

The Federal Pell Grant Program

We strongly urge Congress to resume the Pell Grant maximum award increases to put the program on a path to \$13,000 – double the FY 21 award – via mandatory and/or discretionary spending. We also urge Congress to provide a higher allocation of funding for the Pell Grant program to both cover an increased maximum award and prevent any potential shortfall that may result from the new FAFSA formula. 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 \$19,000. 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 maintain the purchasing power of the Pell grant by increasing the discretionary maximum award to keep up with inflation.

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 24. 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, continued investment in this program is warranted. Accordingly, we recommend increasing funding for the program to \$75 million in FY 2025.

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. Given the flexibility and great importance of this program for many institutions, it was disappointing to see the program cut by \$10 million in FY24. Therefore, we urge you to fund this program at \$140 million in FY 2025.

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 24 appropriation.

Strengthen Workforce Development and Adult Basic Education

The best opportunity for displaced and economically disadvantaged workers is to augment their skills with education. Federal workforce education programs authorized by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) are needed to help individuals navigate the changing economy. 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 support \$165 million for Postsecondary Student Success Grants and \$45 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 25 and retain the provision from the FY 24 appropriations bill that lifted the statutory cap on individual 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 2025 appropriations process.

Sincerely,

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

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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Jee Hang Lee'.

Jee Hang Lee
ACCT President and CEO