

September 11, 2024

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Johnson  
Speaker  
United States House of Representatives  
568 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Republican Leader  
United States Senate  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries  
Democratic Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
2433 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leader Schumer, Speaker Johnson, Leader McConnell, and Leader Jeffries,

Thank you for your leadership on workforce and education policy issues during the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress. Collectively, the undersigned organizations support the expansion of the Pell Grant program to include eligibility for students enrolled in high quality short-term education and training programs. We ask for your support in passing 'Workforce Pell' legislation that includes adequate protections for students and taxpayers.

Our nation is facing a skills mismatch between the existing workforce and job openings, in sectors such as manufacturing, cybersecurity, allied and direct health care, and infrastructure. Since the pandemic, this situation has only become more acute as we've seen an acceleration in workforce automation and digital transformation. With the rapid pace of technological change, workers and employers need higher education to help them rapidly re-skill throughout their life. Over the next decade, it is expected that each year on average 1.7 million infrastructure workers will leave their jobs or retire, which exacerbates the existing shortage and creates additional challenges for this industry. At the same time, millions of additional jobs will also be created by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Inflation Reduction Act and the CHIPS and Science Act. Between impending departures and the demand for millions of new workers created by these laws, the infrastructure sector will soon face a massive shortage of trained workers—a shortage many times worse than what the sector has already been facing.

Investment in workforce training to fill in-demand jobs has strong public support. According to polling conducted by the National Institute for Civil Discourse, eighty-seven percent of respondents expressed strong support for expanding Pell Grant eligibility to cover workforce training programs, irrespective of age or previous educational background. Ninety-two percent of respondents believe that investing in Career and Technical Education (CTE) is crucial for bolstering the nation's workforce and ensuring economic competitiveness in an increasingly globalized market.

Community and technical colleges and other career and technical institutions are working to meet the challenges of providing affordable and accessible education and training programs that meet the demands of the 21st century workforce. These programs are aligned with in-demand sectors such as health care, transportation, logistics, and IT. Several states have

created initiatives to try and address the immediate and future needs of individuals seeking high-quality shorter-term education and training programs. In Virginia, the FastForward program has awarded 52,900 credentials since 2016 with graduates seeing on average a nearly \$12,000 increase in wages. Indiana has had more than 50,000 individuals complete a postsecondary credential under its Workforce Ready Grant. Illinois funds a program called “Workforce Equity Initiative” that provides grants to cover tuition and fees as well as a \$1000 stipend to put toward expenses such as transportation and child care to help individuals in underserved communities access high-demand, high-pay jobs. Massachusetts has been distributing \$15 million in one-time funding for workforce development in in-demand fields. Yet, even with these efforts, the demand for these programs often outpaces available resources.

At the federal level there is not a consistent and equitable source of financial assistance for students enrolled in postsecondary education and training programs that fall below 600 clock hours and 15 weeks in length. Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, individuals who have barriers to employment may qualify for financial assistance. However, WIOA funding is not based solely on financial need and is contingent upon available funding which has declined significantly in recent years, especially when adjusting for inflation.

As a growing number of students balance additional obligations outside of school, high-quality short-term programs provide the flexibility many students need to access strong career paths. Expanding Pell Grant eligibility to high-quality, shorter-term education and training programs will help create affordable and accessible pathways to postsecondary credentials for tens of thousands of students. As Congress considers this expansion of the Pell Grant program we recommend that eligible programs have sufficient quality guardrails, including requirements that the programs are in-demand and lead to strong outcomes for students. They must also be aligned with a recognized postsecondary credential, meet employer hiring requirements including for licensure or certification, and articulate for credit to support longer-term career pathways.

For these reasons, we ask that you support passage of Workforce Pell legislation during the remainder of the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress. Access to high-quality education and training opportunities benefits workers, as well as our nation's economy and ability to compete globally. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

**National Organizations:**

Advance CTE  
American Association of Community Colleges  
Associated Equipment Distributors  
Association for Career and Technical Education  
Association of Community College Trustees  
Jobs for the Future  
Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies  
National Skills Coalition  
Progressive Policy Institute  
Rebuilding America's Middle Class (RAMC)  
Today's Students Coalition  
UPCEA

**Alabama:**

American Society for Nondestructive Testing Inc

**Arizona:**

Central Arizona College  
GateWay Community College  
Maricopa Community College District Governing Board

**Arkansas:**

Arkansas Community Colleges

**California:**

Allan Hancock College  
Allan Hancock College Foundation  
College of the Canyons  
Community College League of California  
Community College of Ventura County  
Foothill-De Anza Community College District  
Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District  
MiraCosta College  
Monterey Peninsula Community College District  
Nondestructive Management Association  
Palomar Community College  
Riverside Community College District  
Riverside Community College District – Norco College  
San Bernadino Community College District  
Sonoma County Junior College District  
UNITE-LA

**Colorado:**

Colorado Center of Law and Policy  
Colorado Community College System  
Community College of Denver

**Federated States of Micronesia:**

College of Micronesia

**Illinois:**

Elgin Community College  
Illinois Community College Trustees Association  
Lake Land College  
Lincoln Land Community College  
Oakton College  
Parkland College  
Spoon River College

**Indiana:**

Ivy Tech Community College

**Iowa:**

Community Colleges for Iowa  
Des Moines Area Community College  
Eastern Iowa Community College  
Iowa Central Community College  
Iowa Valley Community College District  
Iowa Western Community College  
Northern Iowa Area Community College  
Northwest Iowa Community College  
Southeastern Community College  
Southwestern Community College  
United Way of Central Iowa  
Western Iowa Tech Community College

**Kansas:**

Kansas Association of Community Colleges

**Louisiana:**

Baton Rouge Community College  
Bossier Parish Community College  
Central Louisiana Technical Community College  
Delgado Community College  
L.E. Fletcher Technical Community College  
Louisiana Delta Community College  
Northshore Technical Community College  
Northwest Louisiana Technical Community College  
Nunez Community College  
South Louisiana Community College  
SOWELA Technical Community College

**Maine:**

Coastal Enterprises, Inc.

**Marshall Islands:**

College of the Marshall Islands

**Massachusetts:**

Berkshire Community College  
Bristol Community College  
Bunker Hill Community College  
Greenfield Community College  
Holyoke Community College  
Massachusetts Association of Community Colleges  
Massachusetts Bay Community College  
North Shore Community College  
Northern Essex Community College  
Roxbury Community College

**Maryland:**

Carroll Community College  
Cecil College  
College of Southern Maryland  
Community College of Baltimore County  
Harford Community College  
Holy Cross Health  
Maryland Association of Community Colleges  
Montgomery College  
Wor-Wic Community College

**Michigan:**

Alpena Community College  
Bay College  
Delta College  
Glen Oaks Community College  
Gogebic Community College  
Grand Rapids Community College  
Henry Ford Community College  
Jackson College  
Kalamazoo Valley Community College  
Kellogg Community College  
Kirtland Community College  
Lansing Community College  
Macomb Community College  
Michigan Community College Association

Michigan Manufacturers Association  
Mid Michigan College  
Monroe County Community College  
Montcalm Community College  
Mott Community College  
Muskegon Community College  
North Central Michigan College  
Northwestern Michigan College  
Oakland Community College  
Schoolcraft College  
Southwestern Michigan College  
Washtenaw Community College  
Wayne County Community College District  
West Shore Community College

**Mississippi:**

Eastern Mississippi Community College  
Hinds Community College  
Itawamba Community College  
Meridian Community College  
Mississippi Delta Community College  
Northeast Mississippi Community College  
Northwest Mississippi Community College

**Missouri:**

Crowder College  
Jefferson College  
Mineral Area College  
Missouri Community College Association  
Moberly Area Community College  
North Central Missouri College  
Ozarks Technical Community College  
St. Charles Community College  
State Fair Community College  
St. Louis Community College  
Urban League of St. Louis

**Nebraska:**

Central Community College  
Metropolitan Community College  
Nebraska Community College Association

**Nevada:**

Nevada System of Higher Education

**New Hampshire:**

Community College System of New Hampshire

**New Jersey:**

Bergen Community College  
Rowan College at Burlington County

**New Mexico:**

New Mexico Independent Community College  
San Juan College  
Santa Fe Community College

**New York:**

Mohawk Valley Community College  
Rochester Technology and Manufacturing Association  
RochesterWorks  
SUNY Westchester Community College

**North Carolina:**

Beaufort County Community College  
Cape Fear Community College  
Catawba Valley Community College  
College of The Albemarle  
Edgecombe Community College  
Fayetteville Technical Community College  
Halifax Community College  
Isothermal Community College  
Johnston Community College  
Martin Community College  
Mayland Community College  
North Carolina Association of Community College Presidents  
Southeastern Community College  
Western Piedmont Community College  
Wilson Community College

**Northern Mariana Islands:**

Northern Marianas Technical Institute

**Ohio:**

Clark State College

**Oregon:**

Lane Community College

Oregon Community College Association

Treasure Valley Community College

**Pennsylvania:**

Bucks County Community College

Butler County Community College

Community College of Allegheny County

Community College of Beaver County

Community College of Philadelphia

Delaware County Community College

Luzerne County Community College

Montgomery County Community College

Northampton Community College

Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges

Pennsylvania Highlands Community College

Westmoreland County Community College

**Rhode Island:**

Community College of Rhode Island

**Texas:**

Restore Education

San Jacinto College

Texas Southmost College

**Utah:**

Salt Lake Community College



**Virginia:**

Germanna Community College  
Rappahannock Community College  
Tidewater Community College  
Virginia Community College System

**Washington:**

Centralia College  
Clark College  
Edmonds College  
Evergreen Goodwill of Northwest Washington  
Lower Columbia College  
Pierce College District  
Renton Technical College  
Shoreline Community College  
Tacoma Community College  
Washington State Association of College Trustees  
Washington State Board for Community & Technical Colleges

**West Virginia:**

West Virginia Community and Technical College System

**Wisconsin:**

Blackhawk Technical College  
Lakeshore Technical College  
Madison Area Technical College  
Moraine Park Technical College  
Northcentral Technical College  
Western Technical College  
Wisconsin Technical College District Boards Association

**Wyoming:**

Casper College  
Central Wyoming College  
Gillette Community College District  
Laramie County Community College  
Northwest Community College  
Wyoming Association of Community College Trustees  
Wyoming Community College Commission

CC: Senator Bernie Sanders, Chair, Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, Senator Bill Cassidy, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, Representative Virginia Foxx, Chair, House Committee on Education and Labor, Representative, Bobby Scott, Ranking Member, House Committee on Education and Labor, Senator Tim Kaine, Senator Mike Braun, Representative Lisa Blunt Rochester