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COMMUNITY COLLEGE 2025 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES BACKGROUND BRIEFING INFORMATION



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BUDGET RECONCILIATION LEGISLATION: THE BASICS

Often when one party controls both chambers of Congress and the presidency, it will attempt to pass major legislation through the budget reconciliation process that it would not otherwise be able to pass without a filibuster-proof majority in the Senate. Recent examples of budget reconciliation legislation include the Democrats' Inflation Reduction Act and American Rescue Plan Act and the Republicans' Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) during the first Trump administration.

The budget reconciliation process begins with House and Senate passage of identical budget resolutions. The budget contains reconciliation "instructions" to various committees to pass legislation that reduces (or adds to) the deficit by a certain amount. Each of those committees must pass legislation complying with the instructions by a certain date, after which the budget committees compile those bills into one reconciliation package.

What can be included in a budget reconciliation bill is constrained by the "Byrd Rule" in the Senate. Essentially the Byrd Rule states that budget reconciliation legislation may only contain provisions that have a direct impact on the budget. Provisions that have no impact on the budget, or whose budget impact is secondary to their main purpose, are not allowed in budget reconciliation legislation. Furthermore, the provision cannot increase the deficit outside of a ten-year window. That is why, for instance, many of the tax cuts in the TCJA expire at the end of this year. The Senate Parliamentarian is tasked with deciding whether a given provision complies with the Byrd rule.

The most important aspect of a budget reconciliation bill is that it may pass the Senate with a simple majority vote. The Republicans aim to pass one or more reconciliation bills this year to extend and possibly increase expiring tax cuts, build a border wall and otherwise enhance border security, repeal environmental tax credits, and other items.

As noted on the Green Sheet, community colleges are advocating for certain things to be included in reconciliation legislation, including workforce Pell legislation, funds to shore up the Pell program, and the Tax Free Pell Grant Act.

The main impact on higher education, however, would most likely be cuts to the student loan programs and possibly a risk sharing scheme imposed on institutions. Congressional Republicans will want at least a portion of the tax cuts and spending items in the reconciliation bill to be offset with savings in other

programs. The main thrust of any bill passed by the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions and House Education and Workforce committees will be to produce savings through the provisions mentioned above.

Community colleges are particularly opposed to any risk sharing provisions in the budget reconciliation bill. These would likely be modeled after the risk sharing scheme contained in the House Republicans' College Cost Reduction Act (CCRA), which essentially forces institutions to pay for any non-payment, forgiveness, or other subsidy of their former students' loans. In CCRA, these payments are somewhat counterbalanced by PROMISE grants that reward institutions for lower tuition levels and positive outcomes, but those grants would not necessarily be included in a budget reconciliation bill.

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

Despite significant developments in the last Congress, the long campaign to extend Pell Grant eligibility to students in shorter-term workforce education programs continues into the 119th Congress. Committee leadership changes and early signs of Trump administration support for workforce Pell increase the optimism for enactment this Congress, though community college advocates must continue to counter forces that would add so many “guardrails” to the legislation that would render it ineffective.

Sen. Bill Cassidy, the new chairman of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, has a stronger record of support for workforce Pell legislation than his counterpart Ranking Member Sen. Bernie Sanders. In the 118th Congress, Sen. Cassidy cosponsored both the bipartisan Jumpstart Our Businesses by Supporting Students Act (JOBS Act) and the Republican backed PELL Act. The JOBS Act was recently reintroduced by Sens. Tim Kaine, Susan Collins, Roger Marshall, and Tina Smith. This support from the top spot on the committee will

hopefully translate into committee action in the coming months. Hoped-for HELP committee markups of the JOBS Act never came to fruition in the 118th Congress.

Late in 2023, the House Committee on Education and Workforce approved the Bipartisan Workforce Pell Act. The bill combined, and in many cases modified, elements of three workforce Pell bills that had been previously introduced in the House. Full House consideration of the bill was stymied largely due to opposition to the bill's "pay for" which would have imposed risk sharing on the small number of private colleges and universities that are subject to the endowment tax.

It is not yet clear whether the Education and Workforce Committee will pick up where it left off by reintroducing the Bipartisan Workforce Pell Act in the current Congress. If it is, the issue of the pay-for must be resolved. AACC and ACCT endorsed both the JOBS Act and the Bipartisan Workforce Pell Act in the 118th Congress (while expressing opposition to the BWPA's pay-for).

Education Secretary nominee Linda McMahon penned an op-ed that ran in The Hill urging enactment of workforce Pell legislation. This is a greater show of support than anything done by the Biden administration and will hopefully be reflected in official Trump administration policies.

Finally, budget reconciliation legislation may provide an opportunity to pass workforce Pell legislation. As noted above, how to pay for such a bill has been a sticking point. Repurposing a small amount of the money that the education committees are expected to cut from the student loan programs in budget reconciliation legislation would solve this problem. However, any version of workforce Pell legislation that complies with budget reconciliation rules would likely lack many of the quality assurance provisions found in the JOBS Act and the Bipartisan Workforce Pell Act. Thus, enacting workforce Pell legislation via the budget reconciliation process would be more politically complex but potentially result in legislation that would make a greater number of community college programs eligible for workforce Pell.

Talking Points:

- Short-term or Workforce Pell is a long-standing community college priority with strong bipartisan support.
- Workforce Pell has the backing of employers, and would help fill much needed job vacancies at the local level.
- 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 118th Congress came agonizingly close to reauthorizing the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)*, which was last reauthorized over 10 years ago. It remains unclear, however, whether this will translate into quick enactment of legislation this year.

Last June, the House overwhelmingly passed the *A Stronger Workforce for America Act (ASWAA)*, which AACC and ACCT endorsed. The bill's highlight was authorization of the *Strengthening Community College Training Grants Program (SCCTG)* (slightly changing the name to the *Strengthening Community College Workforce Development Grants* program due to former Chairwoman Virginia Foxx's dislike of the word training). SCCTG has been funded for five years as an unauthorized program, so authorization would put the program on a more solid footing. The bill's language did not fundamentally change the program as it has been administered to date: it would continue to be a Department of Labor (DOL) competitive grant program to community colleges working in partnerships with businesses and others to expand and improve their workforce education programs.

ASWAA also emphasized 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 (ITA) for dislocated workers. Those workers would be guaranteed an ITA of at least \$5,000 as a result.

Later in the year, the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee released its own bipartisan WIOA reauthorization bill. It was similar in many respects to the House bill, but many of its details were different. For community colleges, one key difference from the House bill was that it did not authorize the SCCTG program. However, the Senate bill would automatically include all community college programs on the Eligible Trainer Provider List (ETPL) from which WIOA participants choose their training program. This has been a longstanding community college priority but nonetheless was a surprise element of the Senate bill.

After months of negotiations, the House and Senate committees unveiled a new, bipartisan and bicameral version of ASWAA late in 2024. The legislation was included in the original version of the Continuing Resolution that was agreed to by Congressional leaders. However, then President-elect Trump called for a new

version of the CR that raised the debt ceiling, which ultimately failed. Congress then passed a third version of the CR that was similar in many respects to the first, but did not include ASWAA (and other legislation that was tacked onto the CR). So, the 118th Congress ended without enactment of ASWAA, which was briefly on the cusp of occurring.

To date, in the current Congress, both Chairman Walberg and Ranking Member Scott of the House Education and Workforce Committee have indicated that passing WIOA reauthorization legislation is a top priority. However, indications are that WIOA is less of a priority for new HELP Chairman Cassidy. That dynamic could change, however, if the House once again passes ASWAA.

FOCUS STUDENT TAX POLICY ON THOSE WHO CAN BENEFIT MOST

Along with grants and loans, tax benefits can be thought of as the third major component of federal financial aid provided to students. However, the current design of higher education tax benefits should be significantly improved to better support financially needy community college students.

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

AACC and ACCT strongly support the enactment of the *Tax-Free Pell Grant Act*. This legislation was introduced on a bipartisan basis in both the House and Senate in the last Congress. However, a suitable vehicle for moving the legislation was not available at that time, and the legislation never stood a realistic chance of being enacted. This is about to change, given the support across Congress for extending many of the major provisions included in the 2017 *Tax Cut and Jobs Act*. Lacking this action, taxes will increase substantially on millions of Americans.

Tax legislation falls under the jurisdiction of the Senate Finance Committee and the House Ways and Means Committee. In 2025, the legislation will be moved under the budget reconciliation process, which means that it will likely be passed with only Republican votes, even if many Democratic members support some of its provisions.

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 whose benefits are concentrated on community college students, because their low tuitions often leave them with a tax liability; only the portion of the Pell Grant that exceeds tuition and required fees is subject taxation, and so it's mostly only community college students who are in this situation.

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 no benefit whatsoever. Both the taxation of community college students' Pell Grants and their frequent inability to qualify for the AOTC stems from community colleges' low tuition.

As noted, the *Tax-Free Pell Grant Act* has bipartisan support in both chambers of Congress. The current Congress provides a golden opportunity to make this commonsense change.

Reasons to support the Tax-Free Pell Grant Act:

- 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.
- 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. It will ensure that Pell Grant recipients are able to receive the \$2,500 American Opportunity Tax Credit.
- The legislation is bipartisan and is broadly seen as a commonsense solution to an outcome that was largely unanticipated.

JOIN THE HOUSE COMMUNITY COLLEGE CAUCUS

Congressman Gus Bilirakis (R-FL) and Joe Courtney (D-CT) have relaunched the bipartisan House Community College Caucus. The goal of the Community College Caucus is to raise awareness about the unique role our institutions play in the American educational system, as well as provide a forum for Members of Congress to identify and discuss issues affecting community colleges.

We urge everyone to ask their representatives to join the Community College Caucus by reaching out to Congressman Bilirakis' or Courtney's offices.

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 (FWS), 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 \$20,570 (\$4,050 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 FY25 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. As the Republican majorities in the House and the Senate consider cuts to discretionary programs similar to those proposed by the House in 2024, it is imperative that lawmakers understand the impact these programs have on their constituents.

During the first Trump administration, President Trump's budget requests often included proposed cuts to several programs that support student access and success, and as we have recently learned, the Administration will look to block funding to programs that do not align with the President's executive orders, as such it's critical to share with federal lawmakers how each and every one of the below programs benefits their constituents.

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 \$200 to combat inflation, 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 considering housing insecurity reached its highest reported level in 2023.

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.

Talking Points:

- 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 effort to maintain funding for FSEOG, FWS, TRIO, GEAR UP, PPSG, CCAMPIS, and Basic Needs programs in FY25.

Strengthen Under-Resourced Institutions

Securing increased funding for institutional aid 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 are colleges 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.

Like the student success programs, Title III and IV programs were often targeted for cuts during the first Trump administration and their focus on different student groups may place a target on them as President Trump seeks to eliminate any federal support for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access (DEIA) programs. Educating federal lawmakers and emphasizing that these institutional programs

help our institutions improve student success for all students will be critical in our advocacy.

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 maintains investments in these programs during the FY25 appropriations process.

Specifically, community colleges support:

Strengthening Institutions Program (SIP): SIP is authorized in Title III, Part A of the HEA and provides institutions with limited resources who serve low-income students with grants to become 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 are a substantial portion of grant recipients, advocacy for this program is especially important. Congress reduced funding by \$10 million in FY 2024, and we are asking for the program's funding to be restored to previous levels.

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.

Talking Points:

- 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.

- While these programs may target specific, underrepresented student populations, the funding our colleges receive helps provide additional support and better equips our institutions to help ALL students enrolled.

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 needs across regions of the country. Additionally, as the federal government prioritizes investments in key sectors such as manufacturing 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.

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 current 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*. The Senate legislation has long been championed by Sen. Bill Cassidy (R-LA), chair of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, & Pensions (HELP), and Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), with strong bipartisan support in the Senate. The most recent House version was 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 and Community Colleges

While many stakeholders will benefit from the bill, community colleges have a particular interest in this legislation. The *College Transparency Act* 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 and thus better reflect 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.

FARM BILL

The reauthorization of the *Farm Bill* presents an important opportunity for community colleges in the 119th Congress. 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: providing direct assistance for agricultural 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* (CCAAA). 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.

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. These programs help promote economic security for SNAP participants and strengthen local economies. Community colleges support the *SNAP E&T Enhancements Act*, 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* should simplify SNAP eligibility and encourage uptake for eligible 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 new *Farm Bill* should encourage SNAP access for eligible college students. Beyond this, policymakers should look to streamline 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.

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 polarization and razor-thin majorities in Congress create little prospect for Congressional action, and the new Trump administration is more focused on border security and mass deportation campaigns, the latest judicial action on the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program leaves DACA recipients in a state of limbo and reminds us that a permanent solution is needed for these members of our communities.

Here is a brief timeline of the DACA program:

2012: The DACA program is first established through an Obama era memorandum. This is currently the only reprieve from deportation proceedings that dreamers have. It also allows them to have a work permit and must be renewed every two years. One of the many requirements DACA recipients must meet is to be enrolled in school or in the military. As such, the establishment of the program opened the doors to higher education and encouraged dreamers to enroll in many of our institutions.

2017: The first Trump administration attempted to end the program, but the decision was challenged in the courts and the case slowly moved through the judiciary.

2020: The case reached the Supreme Court. In the meantime, the program did not accept any new applicants but allowed existing DACA recipients to continue renewing. The Supreme Court did not rule on the lawfulness of the program itself but found that the Trump administration had not taken the necessary steps to eliminate the program.

2021-2022: During the Biden administration, several republican state attorneys general challenged the constitutionality of the DACA program.

October 2022: The case eventually reached the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit where the Court 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.

September 13, 2023: The rule was challenged in Courts and 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 went back to the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals.

January 21, 2025: The 5th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled DACA as unlawful once again. However, expecting the case to go up to the Supreme Court, the court placed a stay on the ruling, allowing current recipients to continue renewing but preventing any new applications.

Since the DACA program has not allowed new applications for several years, there are many more eligible dreamers that never had the chance to get a work permit and enroll in postsecondary education. Additionally, given its fragile standing with the Courts, the only true solution for the millions of Dreamers in the country is a legislative solution and congressional action. Any legislative fix would include strict eligibility criteria, including having no criminal record. Any potential legislation to address this issue should include enrollment in postsecondary education as one of the options to satisfy eligibility requirements.

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 and are upstanding members of their communities. Community colleges educate thousands of Dreamers who are striving to attain a higher education. We urge Congress and the Trump administration to work together to provide a legislative solution for Dreamers.