

The Honorable Bill Cassidy, M.D.
Chair, Senate Committee on Health,
Education, Labor & Pensions

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Health,
Education, Labor & Pensions

The Honorable Tim Walberg
Chair, House Committee on Education and
the Workforce

The Honorable Robert C. “Bobby” Scott
Ranking Member, House Committee on
Education & Workforce

April 7, 2025

Dear Chair Cassidy, Chair Walberg, Ranking Member Sanders, and Ranking Member Scott,

We write as the Increasing Support for Community Colleges Coalition, a group of organizations that advocate for greater investment in community colleges and the important role that they play in providing access to postsecondary and job-training opportunities for students and workers in communities across the country. Our coalition is broad and includes education policy researchers, advocacy organizations, among others that engage with policymakers in government on issues related to community colleges. We urge you to support and strengthen these institutions in the 119th Congress to help grow the workforce and provide pathways to economic mobility and opportunity for more Americans.

There are over 1,000 community colleges in the United States.¹ These institutions are vital for providing access to higher education and workforce training for over 10 million credit and noncredit students.² In 2016, 49% of all students completing a bachelor’s degree at a 4-year institution had been previously enrolled at a 2-year public college, 61% of community college graduates live within 50 miles of the campus they attended and 82% of public high schools offer dual enrollment programs allowing students to take college classes at their community college.³ Additionally, community colleges broadly sustain and advance economic prosperity and global competitiveness for our country. They also function as major employers, providers of essential services, real estate holders, and drivers of economic activity in many communities.⁴ Greater federal investments in community colleges would have positive economic effects across the board.

¹ [AACC Fast Facts](#)

² [AACC Fast Facts](#)

³Text - H.Res.334 - 118th Congress (2023-2024): Recognizing the significance of "Community College Month" as a celebration of more than 1,000 institutions throughout the United States supporting access to higher education, workforce training, and more broadly sustaining and advancing the Nation's economic prosperity. (2023, April 27), available at <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-resolution/334/text>

⁴https://www.richmondfed.org/-/media/RichmondFedOrg/publications/research/econ_focus/2023/q3/district_digest.pdf

As the 119th Congress continues to advance its agenda, we respectfully request that you and your colleagues consider the following policies:

- I. **Pell Grants:** The Pell Grant is the bedrock of need-based federal aid for postsecondary students from low- and middle-income families, and a sizable share of community college students receive a Pell Grant.⁵ Therefore, increasing the amount awarded for Pell grants is critically important to better support access and affordability for higher education. Of concern, the Pell Grant is currently projected to face a shortfall this year.⁶ To protect this important program, we encourage you to address the spending shortfall before harmful eligibility or award cuts are made. Ultimately, we hope to see the Pell Grant increased, indexed to inflation, and funded via mandatory spending.
- II. **Strengthening Community College Training Grant program:** These grants provide awards to community colleges and other institutions to develop and provide equitable education and training and create partnerships with employers and the public workforce system. In December 2024, the Department of Labor announced they were awarding \$65 million in grants to “18 colleges in 14 states to support programs that help community colleges scale affordable, high-quality workforce training to meet employers’ and workers’ skill development needs in critical industry sectors, such as advanced manufacturing, clean energy, semiconductors and biotechnology.”⁷ Since its inception in Fiscal Year 2020, this program has supported the workforce training capacity of 207 community colleges across 35 states. Given its impact, and potential to reach more states and institutions, we request that Congress codify this grant program with robust funding.
- III. **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act:** The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is the primary federal legislation that funds and authorizes the nation’s public workforce development system. WIOA was passed with the goal of better connecting workers with opportunities in the labor market, including workers who face barriers to employment. In program year 2023, WIOA served 278,770 adults; 185,436 dislocated workers; 131,402 youth; and 2,452,241 through the Wagner-Peyser program.⁸ We support a reauthorization of WIOA with robust funding to meet current workforce and training needs.
- IV. **Agency Programs:** We support funding for the Department of Labor for the federal registered apprenticeship system as well as increased funding for the Department of Education programs, like Career and Technical Education, Adult Education and Literacy, and the Postsecondary Student Success Grant (PSSG) programs, which support postsecondary access and completion for traditional and non-traditional students alike.

⁵ <https://www.ccdaily.com/2025/01/datapoints-pell-grants-disbursements/>

⁶ <https://ticas.org/affordability-2/new-cbo-projections-show-the-pell-grant-program-is-facing-a-funding-gap-this-year/>

⁷ <https://www.dol.gov/newsroom/releases/eta/eta20241230>

⁸ <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/performance/wioa-performance>

The Increasing Support for Community Colleges Coalition thanks you for your leadership and commitment to a strong education system that recognizes the important role of community colleges, and we welcome the opportunity to further discuss these issues with you. If you have any questions, please contact Veronica Goodman, Senior Director for Workforce Development Policy, at the Center for American Progress at vgoodman@americanprogress.org.

Sincerely,

Center for American Progress (CAP)
American Association of Community Colleges (AACC)
Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT)
Jobs for the Future (JFF)

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