



April 9, 2025

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 1,024 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 success and help prepare the nation's workforce.

Federal investments in student aid and institutional support are essential to our institutions' mission of educating Americans for better jobs and supporting local communities. Community colleges offer a broad spectrum of educational offerings for a wide variety of students. Many students need support beyond academic programming, including basic skills education, childcare, and other services. Serving all these students well is instrumental to their personal success and to the strength of the American economy.

In addition to urging your support for the priorities specified below, we also ask the committee to work with the Trump administration to ensure that the funds contained in the FY 25 continuing resolution are expended in accordance with the programmatic funding levels contained in the conference report accompanying the FY 24 Further Consolidated Appropriations Act. Community colleges are very concerned about the instability that could be created by deviations from prior funding levels in certain programs, particularly the student aid programs and those that are included in the umbrella appropriation for higher education programs, including Higher Education Act Title III and V programs, TRIO, GEAR-UP, CCAMPIS, and more. We were glad to see that the Dept. of Education has funded Federal Work Study and Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants at their FY 24 levels.

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 2026 include:



The Federal Pell Grant Program

We urge the committee to increase the Pell Grant maximum award by \$200 in FY 26, to keep pace with inflation. We are cognizant of the fact that CBO has projected a \$98 million cumulative shortfall in the Pell program over the next ten years if no changes are made to the program's budget authority. The best way to address the shortfall is through budget reconciliation legislation and our organizations have been strongly advocating for this action. We hope that Congressional appropriators are not left to deal with this shortfall, which could lead to harmful eligibility cuts for students. Again, we urge you and other members of the appropriations committee to do all that you can to address the Pell Grant program shortfall in budget reconciliation legislation.

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 our institutions with direct support for expanded workforce training capacity which allows them to meet the demand for skilled workers in a variety of industries nationwide. Congressional authorizers expressed their strong support for this program by including it in the A Stronger Workforce for America Act, which as you know was included in the original version of the CR that passed last December. We recommend increasing program funding by \$10 million in FY 2026.

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. This program is critical to many institutions and offers flexibility to address their institutional needs and goals. It was thus disappointing to see it cut by \$10 million in FY24. We urge you to fund this program at \$140 million in FY 2026.

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 employers. 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 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 26 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. We support the Student Aid Alliance request that 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 2026 appropriations process.

Sincerely,

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

Jee Hang Lee
ACCT President and CEO