



March 11, 2026

The Honorable Susan Collins, Chair
Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Patty Murray, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito, Chair
Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin, Ranking Member
Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee

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

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

The Honorable Tommy Tuberville, Chair
Subcommittee on Education and the American Family

The Honorable Lisa Blunt Rochester, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Education and the American Family

Re: Community College Federal Funding Priorities

Dear Chairs Collins, Capito, Cassidy, and Tuberville, Vice Chair Murray, and Ranking Members Baldwin, Sanders, and Blunt Rochester:

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.

To provide needed investments for community college enrollment and completion to enhance America's workforce, we urge you to provide the largest possible allocation for the Labor-HHS-Education (LHHS-ED) appropriations bill. We urge you to support the critical investments below without cutting other education and labor programs.

We also ask Congress to work with the Trump administration to ensure that fiscal year 2026 (FY 26) final appropriations are expended in accordance with the programmatic funding levels and instructions contained in the explanatory statement accompanying the FY 26 law. 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 and higher education programs, including Higher Education Act Title III and V programs, TRIO, GEAR-UP, CCAMPIS, and more.



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 2027 include:

The Federal Pell Grant Program

Pell Grants are Congress's bedrock commitment to low-income students. Pell Grants are critical to developing the skilled workforce that employers need to grow in today's economy. A study by the National Bureau of Economic Research found that the government recoups the cost of Pell Grants in only ten years, because recipients graduate, earn higher wages, pay more taxes, and rely less on other social services. We urge the committee to increase the Pell Grant maximum award by at least \$200 in FY 27, to keep pace with inflation.

We are cognizant of the fact that CBO has projected a \$16.9 billion shortfall by FY 27 if no changes are made to the program's budget authority. Congress made bipartisan commitments to expanding Pell eligibility through the FAFSA Simplification Act and as a result, more students are now applying and qualifying for Pell Grants. Congress is now reaping the fruits of its labor through increased Pell Grant eligibility and uptake. Congress must meet the commitments it made to low-income students by providing sufficient funding to preserve the Pell Grant program without any cuts to eligibility or benefits. Congress must not leave low-income students to wither on the vine.

The best way to address the shortfall is through additional funding, whether mandatory or discretionary. We hope that Congressional appropriators are not left to deal with this shortfall by making discretionary funding cuts, which could lead to harmful eligibility cuts for students. Instead, we urge appropriators and authorizers to work together to address the Pell Grant program shortfall without cutting eligibility or benefits and without cuts to other education or workforce development programs.

Strengthening Community College Training Grants

Community colleges strongly support the Strengthening Community Colleges Training Grant (SCCTG) program, which was funded at \$65 million in FY 26. 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. The Trump Administration recently released a new competition using Congress's FY 25 SCCTG funds that focuses on helping colleges prepare for Workforce Pell. Congressional authorizers expressed their strong bipartisan support for SCCTG by including it in the A Stronger Workforce for America Act, which passed the House in 2024. We recommend increasing SCCTG funding by \$10 million, to \$75 million in FY 27.

Support Under-Resourced Institutions and Students

The Higher Education Act Strengthening Institutions Program (SIP, 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. SIP 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 FY26. We urge you to fund this program at \$140 million in FY 27. We also support increases to the Title III and V programs for Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Historically Black Colleges



and Universities, Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions, Tribally-Controlled Colleges and Universities, Predominantly Black Institutions, Native American Serving Nontribal Institutions, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions, and other programs supporting Minority-Serving Institutions and Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

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 \$1,583,832,800, 10 percent above the FY 26 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 (ABE) State Grants help serve 1.8 million participants each year to gain reading, numeracy, English literacy, and GED preparation. We recommend at least \$810 million for the ABE State Grants and strong increases for the other WIOA programs.

Additional Community College Funding Priorities

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 27 and retain the provision from the FY 24 appropriations bill that lifted the statutory cap on individual grants.

Community colleges strongly support the Student Aid Alliance's requests for Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants, Federal Work Study, TRIO, and GEAR UP. We also urge robust increases for International Education and Foreign Languages (Title VI and Fulbright-Hays) programs.

We thank you for your consideration and look forward to working with the committee during the FY 27 appropriations process.

Sincerely,

DeRionne P. Pollard
AACCC President and CEO

Jee Hang Lee
ACCT President and CEO