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The Honorable Richard Durbin  
The Honorable Byron Dorgan  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Durbin and Dorgan:

On behalf of the American Association of Community Colleges (AACCC) and the nearly 1,200 institutions it represents, I am writing to urge you to include significant support for higher education and job training in the Senate jobs bill. This support is sorely needed as our colleges work to respond to the economic downturn by providing the education needed to retrain the workforce.

We ask the Senate to adopt the primary features of the \$23 billion Education Jobs Fund contained in the Jobs for Main Street Act (H.R. 2847) as passed by the House in December. The Fund would help educational institutions maintain and in some cases augment educational services, as well as hire workers for facilities projects. This support is critical because the recession has caused an 11.2% decrease in state tax revenue from 2008 to 2009. On average, community colleges receive 60% of their revenues from state and local sources, so this reduction in tax revenue has often resulted in budget cuts for these institutions.

At the same time, demand for community colleges has spiked. A recent AACCC survey documents that community college enrollments increased by 16.9% in the last two years. Although it is not possible to document the individuals who could not receive desired programs because of funding shortfalls, we are certain that this total approaches, if it does not exceed, one million individuals—individuals who look to their local community college as a way of coping with the pressures of the slack economy.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provided much-needed help to many of our members as they struggled to respond to the recession's impact. But its funding did not reach all campuses, and those that it did reach often found that the funds fell short in relation to need. The funding is also time-limited. Therefore, Federal support remains necessary to assist the nation's communities and the colleges that serve them. AACCC urges you to incorporate in the Senate jobs legislation provisions similar to those in H.R. 2847 that provide support to public institutions of higher education, while ensuring that community colleges receive their fair share. "Fair share" means allocations reflecting community college enrollments, recent funding reductions, and their necessary role in restoring broad-based prosperity. Our association stands ready to work with you on specific legislative provisions that will achieve this.

The House jobs bill also builds on ARRA's support for job training as a crucial element in economic recovery. While recovery will not bring back many of the jobs that have been lost, it will create new opportunities for those with the postsecondary education and training needed to take advantage of them. In fact, the Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that employment growth through 2016 will be the fastest for occupations requiring an associate's degree or a postsecondary vocational certificate.

Unfortunately, even now, many employers cannot find the skilled workers that they need. The Senate jobs bill should reflect this reality, and provide significant support for job training programs.

Our campus members look forward to working with you as this crucial legislation moves forward. Please let me know if I can provide you with any further information or support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "George R. Boggs". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "G" and "B".

George R. Boggs  
President and CEO