



April 9, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-230, U.S. Capitol
Washington D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader Schumer:

On behalf of the nation's 1,044 community colleges, we would like to thank you for your efforts on the pandemic relief measures passed by Congress over the past several months. The funding allocated to our institutions through these measures will continue to enable students, faculty, and staff to weather the financial setbacks and other dislocations caused by the coronavirus. This would not have been possible without the CARES, CRRSAA, and ARP legislation.

In addition to ensuring students have continued access to academic and support services, community colleges are actively moving the country toward its full economic potential. The post-pandemic economy will be driven by education and training opportunities in industries such as artificial intelligence, green energy, robotics, logistics, cloud computing and other areas. These new training programs complement longstanding community college offerings, such as nursing and allied health, law enforcement and other first-responders, teacher training, and information technology, among others.

By prioritizing job creation, physical and technological infrastructure, training, and broadband enhancement and access, President Biden's American Jobs Plan will help create an environment that will help community colleges catalyze economic growth. We strongly support these and other elements of the American Jobs Plan and urge you to support the following as you craft corresponding recovery legislation.

Infrastructure: Community colleges are enthusiastic, and thankful, for the Jobs Plan's \$12 billion community college infrastructure investment. The increasing sophistication of technical education, which has a growing virtual component, requires continuous, large-scale capital investments. However, academic facilities across the array of community colleges also need modernization. Unfortunately, state and local support falls far short of need. This results in an increasing backlog of unaddressed infrastructure projects and mounting number of deferred maintenance needs, with an inevitable impact on education quality.

The President's community college infrastructure proposal is critical and appreciated. In evaluating facilities needs across all our colleges, we estimate national total deferred maintenance, needed renovations and upgrades at \$60 billion. This does not include new construction that colleges hope to undertake in the coming months and year. Therefore, we ask that \$50 billion be provided for community college facilities in any recovery legislation.



Projects funded through this proposal would include advanced manufacturing sites, libraries, nanotechnology laboratories, nursing facilities, and smart classroom structures. Investment would not only improve instruction on our campuses; it would directly benefit the local community, which often participates in college offerings and provide a boost to local economic activity.

Any federal effort should ensure a broad diffusion of funds, both regionally and among types of institutions, including smaller colleges, who often have challenges successfully competing for funds. Emphasis should be given to facilities projects with a strong local economic impact.

Workforce Development: The American Jobs Plan proposes \$100 billion for workforce development, including \$48 billion to build the capacity of existing workforce development systems. The plan specifically supports community college partnerships that increase the capacity of postsecondary institutions to deliver relevant job training. Consistent with the President's plan, we again urge you to authorize a major community college job training grant program closely aligned with business needs. The program should be modeled after the successful Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) grant program, which provided \$1.9 billion in grants over four years to community colleges, resulting in 300,000 postsecondary credentials earned and 2,700 new or redesigned postsecondary programs.

To further encourage economic opportunity, we ask for financial support for students enrolling in high-quality, short-term education and training programs. Most postsecondary programs that are less than 600 clock hours over 15 weeks of instruction are ineligible for federal financial aid, putting the programs out of reach for many potential students who are financially disadvantaged. The bipartisan JOBS Act (S.864, H.R. 2037) aims to rectify this by extending Pell grant eligibility to students enrolled in qualifying short-term programs. Community colleges wholeheartedly support the JOBS Act and consider it ever-more urgent as the nation moves towards a post-pandemic recovery.

Broadband: Finally, we strongly support the Jobs Plan's \$100 billion investment to expand high-speed broadband. The pandemic has highlighted the cost to the nation of the current state of broadband. Community college educators and students have witnessed these shortcomings for years but are now experiencing this deficiency even more acutely. Now is the moment to realize the bold step envisioned in the President's plan.

Please let us know what we can do to facilitate the support that is so critical to our colleges and students. Thank you again for your commitment to our students and colleges.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Walter G. Bumphus'.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'J. Noah Brown'.

J. Noah Brown
President and CEO, ACCT