



July 19, 2021

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
US Senate
Washington DC, 20510

Dear Leader Schumer:

We write on behalf of the nation's 1,044 community colleges, representing institutional CEOs and their trustees. As Congress considers President Biden's American Jobs Plan (AJP) and American Families Plan (AFP), we seek your support for key investments in our students and institutions. This moment marks a truly historic opportunity to secure individual economic opportunity and long-term economic growth by promoting the nation's community colleges. Community colleges remain by far the most affordable, accessible and relevant sector of higher education; however, further support is necessary to help them realize their students' full potential. Each of the following proposals would have a profoundly positive impact on our sector, and we urge you to work for their enactment.

Tuition-Free Community College: Eliminating community college tuition and fees would revolutionize U.S. postsecondary education, making it universally available by dramatically reducing students' costs. The resulting boost in educational opportunity would lead to a substantial increase in family-sustaining wages and economic mobility. AACC and ACCT strongly endorse the basic principle of waiving community college tuition and fees for most students. The case for a national policy of zero community college tuition is clear. Ongoing economic and technological developments require greater educational attainment for all citizens; some postsecondary education is almost essential for individual financial security. Increased college attainment is not just a private good, however, as it benefits the broader community economically and socially. With their low tuitions and broad accessibility, community colleges are the logical place to achieve these goals. There is significant and growing evidence that Promise programs are responsible for increased community college enrollments, despite ongoing enrollment declines at most institutions.

Community College Workforce Development: The American Jobs Plan proposed \$48 billion to expand the capacity of existing workforce development systems, and the Administration's FY 2022 budget calls for \$9 billion over ten years for community college partnerships that increase their job training capacity and quality. We support this proposal for a major community college job training grant program closely aligned with business needs, ranging from short-term non-credit courses to applied baccalaureate degrees. Community colleges also prepare workers for industry certifications, often embedding these credentials in their curricula. These ongoing activities are limited only by funding availability. The importance of a more robust federal role in this area is particularly critical in this time of economic challenge and transition that the nation is now experiencing.



Community College Infrastructure: The AJP's \$12 billion community college infrastructure investment addresses a critical community college need. 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 need modernization. Unfortunately, state and local support falls far short of need. This results in an increasing backlog of unaddressed infrastructure projects and a mounting number of deferred maintenance needs, with an inevitable impact on education quality. Across all community colleges, national total deferred maintenance, needed renovations and upgrades total more than \$60 billion. Therefore, we respectfully request a minimum investment of \$50 billion for community college facilities, recognizing that this sum is less than the total need. Projects funded through this proposal would include advanced manufacturing sites, libraries, nanotechnology laboratories, nursing facilities, and smart classroom structures. Investment would advance local economic activity as well as improve community college instruction.

Community College Success Grants: The AFP envisions providing \$62 billion for student success initiatives, recognizing that student financial assistance alone does not ensure college completion, and that investments in proven completion efforts is a cost-effective investment. The unfortunate reality across American higher education is that completion is highly correlated with family income and institutional resources. Community colleges deliver high quality education at a substantially lower cost than other types of colleges, but the lack of dedicated resources for student success hampers their ability to ensure that all students succeed. We therefore strongly support this enhancement of college completion efforts and are eager to work with Congress to fashion a program that relies on proven methods to help all students take full advantage of a community college education.

Community colleges are an essential element of a strong America, and we again urge your support for these proposals, which will help launch our economy and promote greater mobility across the nation. Please contact our associations if you have any questions about these proposals.

Sincerely,

Sincerely,

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

J. Noah Brown
President and CEO, ACCT

cc: Senate Democratic Caucus