



March 4, 2022

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader Schumer, and Minority Leaders McCarthy and McConnell:

On behalf of the nation's 1,042 community colleges, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) and the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) urge Congress to extend Pell Grant eligibility to workers in shorter-term postsecondary education programs in the final bipartisan innovation act resulting from the conference agreement to the American COMPETES Act (H.R. 4521) and the United States Innovation and Competition Act (USICA, S. 1260). Enacting this change would enable thousands of Americans to quickly upgrade their job skills and boost the nation's economy. This is a top legislative priority for our associations.

The America COMPETES Act includes a bipartisan amendment sponsored by Reps. Andy Levin (D-MI) and Anthony Gonzalez (R-OH) that would extend Pell Grant eligibility to students in higher education programs that last between 150 and 599 clock hours (over at least 8 weeks). Currently, only programs at least 600 clock hours, and 15 weeks in length are Pell Grant-eligible.

The Levin-Gonzalez amendment is derived from the Jumpstart Our Businesses by Supporting Students Act (JOBS Act), introduced by Reps. Levin and Gonzalez and Sens. Tim Kaine (D-VA) and Rob Portman (R-OH). The Senate JOBS act has 49 cosponsors. The amendment was originally drafted by Sens. Kaine and Portman and was very nearly added as part of a package of amendments to USICA. The amendment had strong bipartisan support and would have been included in USICA absent a floor objection unrelated to the amendment's content.

The JOBS amendment provides greater opportunities to displaced American workers and others aspiring to improve their economic conditions in a responsible manner. It is limited to programs that will lead students to jobs in high-skill, high-wage or in-demand industry sectors. It will provide prospective students with the information they need about a particular program – including student outcomes and earnings – to make informed decisions. The legislation includes strict “guardrails” to



ensure that only high-quality programs will be funded. The additional cost to the Pell Grant program is small in relation to its overall size—less than 1% of program expenditures, according to CBO.

The Levin-Gonzalez amendment also includes the College Transparency Act (H.R. 2030, S. 839) which AACC and ACCT also strongly support. This legislation would create a federal student unit record data system and generate improved information about student outcomes that will benefit students, institutions, and policymakers. The legislation includes multiple provisions to safeguard the limited amount of data that would be collected.

Community colleges also seek inclusion of two other COMPETES Act provisions in the final legislation. First, the legislation reauthorizes the Department of Labor’s Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) grants program. In its previous iteration, TAACCCT provided nearly \$2 billion over four years to greatly expand and improve community college workforce education programs. The recent pandemic has exacerbated the ongoing skills gap, making this program as necessary as ever. Second, the COMPETES Act’s reauthorization of the National Science Foundation’s Advanced Technological Education program would also boost the nation’s economy by modernizing and growing the NSF’s principal support for community college technician education programs.

We urge your support for these provisions as you finalize this key legislation. Please let us know what we can do to ensure its enactment.

Sincerely,

Walter G. Bumphus  
AACC President and CEO

Jee Hang Lee  
ACCT President and CEO