

September 11, 2024

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
568 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Republican Leader
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Democratic Leader
United States House of Representatives
2433 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leader Schumer, Speaker Johnson, Leader McConnell, and Leader Jeffries,

Thank you for your leadership on workforce and education policy issues during the 118th Congress. Collectively, the undersigned organizations support the expansion of the Pell Grant program to include eligibility for students enrolled in high quality short-term education and training programs. We ask for your support in passing 'Workforce Pell' legislation that includes adequate protections for students and taxpayers.

Our nation is facing a skills mismatch between the existing workforce and job openings, in sectors such as manufacturing, cybersecurity, allied and direct health care, and infrastructure. Since the pandemic, this situation has only become more acute as we've seen an acceleration in workforce automation and digital transformation. With the rapid pace of technological change, workers and employers need higher education to help them rapidly re-skill throughout their life. Over the next decade, it is expected that each year on average 1.7 million infrastructure workers will leave their jobs or retire, which exacerbates the existing shortage and creates additional challenges for this industry. At the same time, millions of additional jobs will also be created by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Inflation Reduction Act and the CHIPS and Science Act. Between impending departures and the demand for millions of new workers created by these laws, the infrastructure sector will soon face a massive shortage of trained workers—a shortage many times worse than what the sector has already been facing.

Investment in workforce training to fill in-demand jobs has strong public support. According to polling conducted by the National Institute for Civil Discourse, eighty-seven percent of respondents expressed strong support for expanding Pell Grant eligibility to cover workforce training programs, irrespective of age or previous educational background. Ninety-two percent of respondents believe that investing in Career and Technical Education (CTE) is crucial for bolstering the nation's workforce and ensuring economic competitiveness in an increasingly globalized market.

Community and technical colleges and other career and technical institutions are working to meet the challenges of providing affordable and accessible education and training programs that meet the demands of the 21st century workforce. These programs are aligned with in-demand sectors such as health care, transportation, logistics, and IT. Several states have

created initiatives to try and address the immediate and future needs of individuals seeking high-quality shorter-term education and training programs. In Virginia, the FastForward program has awarded 52,900 credentials since 2016 with graduates seeing on average a nearly \$12,000 increase in wages. Indiana has had more than 50,000 individuals complete a postsecondary credential under its Workforce Ready Grant. Illinois funds a program called “Workforce Equity Initiative” that provides grants to cover tuition and fees as well as a \$1000 stipend to put toward expenses such as transportation and child care to help individuals in underserved communities access high-demand, high-pay jobs. Massachusetts has been distributing \$15 million in one-time funding for workforce development in in-demand fields. Yet, even with these efforts, the demand for these programs often outpaces available resources.

At the federal level there is not a consistent and equitable source of financial assistance for students enrolled in postsecondary education and training programs that fall below 600 clock hours and 15 weeks in length. Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, individuals who have barriers to employment may qualify for financial assistance. However, WIOA funding is not based solely on financial need and is contingent upon available funding which has declined significantly in recent years, especially when adjusting for inflation.

As a growing number of students balance additional obligations outside of school, high-quality short-term programs provide the flexibility many students need to access strong career paths. Expanding Pell Grant eligibility to high-quality, shorter-term education and training programs will help create affordable and accessible pathways to postsecondary credentials for tens of thousands of students. As Congress considers this expansion of the Pell Grant program we recommend that eligible programs have sufficient quality guardrails, including requirements that the programs are in-demand and lead to strong outcomes for students. They must also be aligned with a recognized postsecondary credential, meet employer hiring requirements including for licensure or certification, and articulate for credit to support longer-term career pathways.

For these reasons, we ask that you support passage of Workforce Pell legislation during the remainder of the 118th Congress. Access to high-quality education and training opportunities benefits workers, as well as our nation's economy and ability to compete globally. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

National Organizations:

Advance CTE
American Association of Community Colleges
Associated Equipment Distributors
Association for Career and Technical Education
Association of Community College Trustees
Jobs for the Future
Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies
National Skills Coalition
Progressive Policy Institute
Rebuilding America's Middle Class (RAMC)
Today's Students Coalition
UPCEA

Alabama:

American Society for Nondestructive Testing Inc

Arizona:

Central Arizona College
GateWay Community College
Maricopa Community College District Governing Board

Arkansas:

Arkansas Community Colleges

California:

Allan Hancock College
Allan Hancock College Foundation
College of the Canyons
Community College League of California
Community College of Ventura County
Foothill-De Anza Community College District
Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District
MiraCosta College
Monterey Peninsula Community College District
Nondestructive Management Association
Palomar Community College
Riverside Community College District
Riverside Community College District – Norco College
San Bernadino Community College District
Sonoma County Junior College District
UNITE-LA

Colorado:

Colorado Center of Law and Policy
Colorado Community College System
Community College of Denver

Federated States of Micronesia:

College of Micronesia

Illinois:

Elgin Community College
Illinois Community College Trustees Association
Lake Land College
Lincoln Land Community College
Oakton College
Parkland College
Spoon River College

Indiana:

Ivy Tech Community College

Iowa:

Community Colleges for Iowa
Des Moines Area Community College
Eastern Iowa Community College
Iowa Central Community College
Iowa Valley Community College District
Iowa Western Community College
Northern Iowa Area Community College
Northwest Iowa Community College
Southeastern Community College
Southwestern Community College
United Way of Central Iowa
Western Iowa Tech Community College

Kansas:

Kansas Association of Community Colleges

Louisiana:

Baton Rouge Community College
Bossier Parish Community College
Central Louisiana Technical Community College
Delgado Community College
L.E. Fletcher Technical Community College
Louisiana Delta Community College
Northshore Technical Community College
Northwest Louisiana Technical Community College
Nunez Community College
South Louisiana Community College
SOWELA Technical Community College

Maine:

Coastal Enterprises, Inc.

Marshall Islands:

College of the Marshall Islands

Massachusetts:

Berkshire Community College
Bristol Community College
Bunker Hill Community College
Greenfield Community College
Holyoke Community College
Massachusetts Association of Community Colleges
Massachusetts Bay Community College
North Shore Community College
Northern Essex Community College
Roxbury Community College

Maryland:

Carroll Community College
Cecil College
College of Southern Maryland
Community College of Baltimore County
Harford Community College
Holy Cross Health
Maryland Association of Community Colleges
Montgomery College
Wor-Wic Community College

Michigan:

Alpena Community College
Bay College
Delta College
Glen Oaks Community College
Gogebic Community College
Grand Rapids Community College
Henry Ford Community College
Jackson College
Kalamazoo Valley Community College
Kellogg Community College
Kirtland Community College
Lansing Community College
Macomb Community College
Michigan Community College Association

Michigan Manufacturers Association
Mid Michigan College
Monroe County Community College
Montcalm Community College
Mott Community College
Muskegon Community College
North Central Michigan College
Northwestern Michigan College
Oakland Community College
Schoolcraft College
Southwestern Michigan College
Washtenaw Community College
Wayne County Community College District
West Shore Community College

Mississippi:

Eastern Mississippi Community College
Hinds Community College
Itawamba Community College
Meridian Community College
Mississippi Delta Community College
Northeast Mississippi Community College
Northwest Mississippi Community College

Missouri:

Crowder College
Jefferson College
Mineral Area College
Missouri Community College Association
Moberly Area Community College
North Central Missouri College
Ozarks Technical Community College
St. Charles Community College
State Fair Community College
St. Louis Community College
Urban League of St. Louis

Nebraska:

Central Community College
Metropolitan Community College
Nebraska Community College Association

Nevada:

Nevada System of Higher Education

New Hampshire:

Community College System of New Hampshire

New Jersey:

Bergen Community College
Rowan College at Burlington County

New Mexico:

New Mexico Independent Community College
San Juan College
Santa Fe Community College

New York:

Mohawk Valley Community College
Rochester Technology and Manufacturing Association
RochesterWorks
SUNY Westchester Community College

North Carolina:

Beaufort County Community College
Cape Fear Community College
Catawba Valley Community College
College of The Albemarle
Edgecombe Community College
Fayetteville Technical Community College
Halifax Community College
Isothermal Community College
Johnston Community College
Martin Community College
Mayland Community College
North Carolina Association of Community College Presidents
Southeastern Community College
Western Piedmont Community College
Wilson Community College

Northern Mariana Islands:

Northern Marianas Technical Institute

Ohio:

Clark State College

Oregon:

Lane Community College

Oregon Community College Association

Treasure Valley Community College

Pennsylvania:

Bucks County Community College

Butler County Community College

Community College of Allegheny County

Community College of Beaver County

Community College of Philadelphia

Delaware County Community College

Luzerne County Community College

Montgomery County Community College

Northampton Community College

Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges

Pennsylvania Highlands Community College

Westmoreland County Community College

Rhode Island:

Community College of Rhode Island

Texas:

Restore Education

San Jacinto College

Texas Southmost College

Utah:

Salt Lake Community College

Virginia:

Germanna Community College
Rappahannock Community College
Tidewater Community College
Virginia Community College System

Washington:

Centralia College
Clark College
Edmonds College
Evergreen Goodwill of Northwest Washington
Lower Columbia College
Pierce College District
Renton Technical College
Shoreline Community College
Tacoma Community College
Washington State Association of College Trustees
Washington State Board for Community & Technical Colleges

West Virginia:

West Virginia Community and Technical College System

Wisconsin:

Blackhawk Technical College
Lakeshore Technical College
Madison Area Technical College
Moraine Park Technical College
Northcentral Technical College
Western Technical College
Wisconsin Technical College District Boards Association

Wyoming:

Casper College
Central Wyoming College
Gillette Community College District
Laramie County Community College
Northwest Community College
Wyoming Association of Community College Trustees
Wyoming Community College Commission

CC: Senator Bernie Sanders, Chair, Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, Senator Bill Cassidy, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, Representative Virginia Foxx, Chair, House Committee on Education and Labor, Representative, Bobby Scott, Ranking Member, House Committee on Education and Labor, Senator Tim Kaine, Senator Mike Braun, Representative Lisa Blunt Rochester