

April 19, 2022

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

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

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
United States House of Representatives  
1236 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Republican Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
2468 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, and Leader McCarthy,

Thank you for your leadership on workforce and education policy issues throughout the 117th Congress. As you conference the United States Innovation and Competition Act of 2021 (USICA) and the America COMPETES Act of 2022 (COMPETES), the undersigned organizations urge you to include in the final package language to expand Pell Grant eligibility to shorter-term education and training programs. The requested language reflects the bipartisan Levin / Gonzalez amendment which passed as part of COMPETES, as well as the proposed bipartisan amendment to USICA offered by Senators Kaine and Portman that was included as part of the manager's package. Both amendments were based on language from the JOBS Act (S. 864, H.R. 2037), which has 50 bipartisan cosponsors in the Senate.

Even before the pandemic, our nation faced a skills mismatch between the existing workforce and job openings, including in sectors such as manufacturing, allied and direct health care, and infrastructure. This situation has only become more acute. Over the past two years 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. According to a recent report by Deloitte and The Manufacturing Institute the skills required to perform many jobs in the manufacturing sector are transforming with a greater need for workers with technical training and applied skills. Failure to address this need for additional skills training could leave up to 2.1 million manufacturing jobs unfilled, and impact productivity, innovation, and U.S. competitiveness. As our economy recovers from the pandemic – the most devastating economic crisis since the Great Depression – our recovery will depend (in part) on workers having access to skills training that growing industries desperately need.

Thousands of community and technical colleges and non-profit 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 32,700 credentials since 2016 with graduates seeing on average a 55

percent increase in wages. Indiana has had more than 50,000 individuals complete a postsecondary credential under its Workforce Ready Grant. Yet, even with these efforts, the demand for these programs often outpaces available resources. After two years of enrollment drops due to the pandemic, North Carolina's enrollment rose in the Fall 2021 because of individuals seeking short-term training programs. While enrollment in traditional academic programs fell by 3 percent, enrollment in short-term workforce education grew by 22 percent.

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. Many community and technical colleges opted to use formula funding under the temporary Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF) to support the expansion of low-cost or no-cost education and training programs that lead to in-demand jobs. However, this is one-time funding intended to respond to the pandemic. Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, individuals who have barriers to employment may qualify for financial assistance, however that is not based solely on financial need and is contingent upon available funding which has declined in recent years 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. For example, military spouses and veterans who may not be eligible for GI Bill benefits, and others looking to return to the workforce post-pandemic often benefit from access to high-quality affordable training to help them find viable employment quickly. Additionally, evidence shows that such assistance helps students access and complete these programs. The Department of Education's evaluation of its short-term Pell Grant Experimental Sites Initiative demonstrated that enrollment and completion rates were higher for students who received aid for these short-term programs than those who did not; program completion increased by nearly 20% when students had access to aid, and students receiving aid were 15% more likely to enroll in additional educational programs.

Expanding Pell Grant eligibility to shorter-term education and training programs will help create affordable and accessible pathways to postsecondary credentials for tens of thousands of students. It does so without requiring additional discretionary appropriations in the coming years, as the cost would be offset by the existing Pell Grant surplus. The COMPETES amendment also includes safeguards for students and taxpayers to ensure that eligible programs are high-quality and in-demand. Eligible programs must be determined as in-demand and demonstrate wage progression for graduates. 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 retain the Levin / Gonzalez amendment in the final conferenced version of USICA and COMPETES. 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  
Aeronautical Repair Station Association  
American Association of Community Colleges  
American Mold Builders Association  
Association for Career and Technical Education  
Association of Community College Trustees  
Association of Equipment Manufacturers Corporation for a Skilled Workforce (CSW)  
Goodwill Industries International, Inc.  
Higher Learning Advocates  
Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA)  
Jobs for the Future (JFF)  
Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies  
National Council on Aging  
National Employment Law Project  
National Endowment for Financial Education  
National Fund for Workforce Solutions  
National Skills Coalition  
Opportunity America  
Opportunity@Work  
Rebuilding America's Middle Class (RAMC)  
State Higher Education Executive Officers Association  
Student Veterans of America

Alaska:

Alaska ACTE  
Bristol Bay Native Association

Alabama:

Central Six AlabamaWorks!  
TechBirmingham

Arkansas:

Arkansas Community Colleges  
Arkansas State University - Beebe  
Arkansas United  
Jonesboro Clinic

Arizona:

Arizona Refugee Resettlement Program  
GateWay Community College  
Pima Community College  
Promise Arizona  
West-MEC

California:

Building Skills Partnership  
California Association for Career and Technical Education  
California EDGE Coalition  
Cambodia Town Inc.  
Center for Employment Training  
First Institute Training & Management, Inc.  
First Place for Youth  
Fresno City College  
JVS SoCal  
Kern, Inyo and Mono County Workforce Development Board  
Los Angeles Community College District

Merced County Office of Education  
MPIC, Inc.  
Opportunity Junction  
Proteus Inc.  
San Diego Community College District  
SkillUp Coalition  
STV Allied Health Education Centers  
UNITE-LA  
Watsonville Aptos Santa Cruz Adult Education  
Colorado:  
CareerWise  
Colorado ACTE  
Colorado Succeeds  
Emily Griffith Technical College  
Remerg  
Skills2Compete Colorado  
Unite North Metro Denver  
Connecticut:  
Capital Community College Foundation  
Connecticut Association for Adult & Continuing Education  
Connecticut Department of Correction  
Connecticut State Colleges and Universities  
Connecticut State Community College  
District of Columbia:  
CityWorks DC  
Healthcare Anchor Network  
Florida:  
Broward College

Emerald Coast Technical College  
Flagler Technical College/Flagler Schools  
George Stone Technical College  
Lively Technical College  
Manatee Technical College  
Osceola Technical College  
Pinellas Technical College Clearwater Campus  
Radford M Locklin Technical College  
RIVEROAK Technical College  
Washington County School District  
Georgia:  
Georgia Association for Career & Technical Education  
Metro Atlanta Chamber  
Youth Jobs Connect  
Guam:  
Guam ACTE  
Guam Marianas Training Center  
Hawaii:  
University of Hawaii  
Iowa:  
Community Colleges for Iowa  
Iowa Central Community College  
Southeastern Community College Iowa  
United Way of Central Iowa  
Illinois:  
AMBE-Advanced Manufacturing Bilingual Educators  
Association of Health Promoters

Chicago Citywide Literacy Coalition  
East Peoria Community High School  
Elgin Community College  
Endeleo Education - Educational Opportunity Center  
Harper College  
Heartland Community College  
Highland Community College  
Illinois Adult and Continuing Educators Association  
Oakton Community College  
Parkland College  
Prairie State College  
Spoon River College  
The Community Works  
Waubonsee Community College  
William Rainey Harper College  
Indiana:  
Horizon Education Alliance  
Indiana Community Action Poverty Institute  
Ivy Tech Community College  
Labor Institute for Training, Inc.  
Southeast Community Services  
Kansas:  
Garden City Community College  
Kansas Association of Community College Trustees  
Workforce Partnership  
Kentucky:  
Greater Louisville Inc.

Kentucky Association for Career and Technical Education  
Kentucky Community and Technical College System  
Louisiana:  
Cafe Hope  
Louisiana Budget Project  
Louisiana Community & Technical College System  
North Louisiana Economic Partnership  
WhereWeGo  
Massachusetts:  
American Student Assistance  
Boston Centerless  
Massachusetts Association of Community Colleges  
Massachusetts Workforce Association  
Operation ABLE of Greater Boston, Inc  
Upper Cape Cod Regional Technical School  
World Education, Inc.  
YMCA of Greater Boston  
Maryland:  
1199SEIU Training and Employment Fund  
Cecil College  
College of Southern Maryland  
Maryland Association of Community Colleges  
National Council of State Directors of Adult Education  
Maine:  
Coastal Enterprises, Inc.

Northeastern Workforce Development Board

Sacopee Valley Adult and Community Education

Michigan:

Advanced Technology Academy

Alpena Community College

Bay College

Black Legacy Coalition

Delta College

Detroit Green Skills Alliance

Glen Oaks Community College

Gogebic Community College

Grand Rapids Community College

Henry Ford College

Jackson Area Manufacturers Association

Jackson College

Kalamazoo Valley Community College

Kellogg Community College

Kirtland Community College

Lake Michigan College

Lansing Community College

Macomb Community College

Michigan Chamber of Commerce

Michigan Community College Association

Michigan League for Public Policy

Michigan Manufacturers Association

Michigan Works! Association

Michigan Works! West Central

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

St. Clair County Community College

Washtenaw Community College

Wayne County Community College District

West Michigan Works!

West Shore Community College

Minnesota:

Minnesota State

Rural Minnesota Concentrated Employment Program, Inc.

Missouri:

Missouri Community College Association

St. Louis Community College

Urban League of St. Louis

Northern Mariana Islands:

Northern Marianas Technical Institute

North Carolina:

Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College

Cleveland Community College

Eastern Carolina Workforce Development Board, Inc.

Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)

NC Budget & Tax Center

Randolph Community College

Right Here, Right Now Project

Sacred Paths, Inc.

Wake Technical Community College

Nebraska:

ACTE of Nebraska

Bancroft-Rosalie Community School

Lutheran Family Services-Refugee  
Economic Empower

Nebraska's Coordinating Commission for  
Postsecondary Education

New Jersey:

Brookdale Community College

Erase The Divide

Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies

New Jersey Institute of Technology

New Mexico:

New Mexico Association for Career  
Technical Education

New York:

Community College Consortium for  
Immigrant Education

Comprehensive Youth Development

Continuing Education Association of New  
York

Finger Lakes Community College

International Development Institute

New York Association of Training and  
Employment Professionals

New York City Employment and Training  
Coalition

Rockland Community College

ROC-United

SUNY Corning Community College

TRANSFR Inc

Workforce Development Board Herkimer,  
Madison, One

World Education Services, Inc.

Ohio:

Advanced Manufacturing Consortium

AMT - The Association For Manufacturing  
Technology

A-Tech

Cuyahoga Community College

Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce

Great Oaks Career Campuses

Hardin County Chamber & Business Alliance

Madison Adult Career Center

Manufacturing Works

Marion Technical College

National Coalition of Advanced Technology  
Centers

NCO Region Industry Manufacturers  
Workforce Alliance

Ohio Association Career Technical  
Superintendents

Ohio Association for Career & Technical  
Education

Ohio Workforce Coalition

OhioMeansJobs Adams - Brown Counties

R4 Workforce

Rhodes State College  
Skills GAP Solutions LLC  
Southern State Community College  
Towards Employment  
Trumbull County Workforce Development Board  
Youth Opportunities Unlimited

Oklahoma:

Goodwill Industries of Central Oklahoma  
Tulsa Technology Center

Oregon:

Blue Mountain Community College  
Chemeketa Community College  
Clackamas Community College  
Klamath Community College  
Lane Community College  
Mt. Hood Community College  
Oregon Community College Association  
Portland Community College  
Rogue Community College  
Treasure Valley Community College

Pennsylvania:

Community College of Beaver County  
Delaware County Community College  
HACC, Central PA Community College  
JEVS Human Services  
Lehigh Carbon Community College  
Montgomery County Community College  
Northampton Community College

OIC of America  
Partner4Work  
Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges  
Philadelphia Commerce Department  
University City District - West Philadelphia Skills Initiative  
William Jeanes Memorial Library  
York County Economic Alliance

Tennessee:

Greater Memphis Chamber  
Knoxville Chamber  
Lockhart Trucking Academy  
Memphis Christian Pastors Network  
Monroe Harding, Inc.  
Moore Tech  
Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce  
Northern Middle Workforce Board  
Tennessee Association for Career and Technical Education  
The Tennessee Latin American Chamber of Commerce  
United Way of Greater Nashville

Texas:

Alamo Colleges District  
Austin Chamber of Commerce  
El Paso Hispanic Chamber  
Houston Community College  
Independent Electrical Contractors Fort Worth / Tarrant County  
San Antonio Chamber of Commerce



Texas Women in Trades

United Way of Tarrant County

United Ways of Texas

Utah:

One Refugee

Salt Lake Community College

Virginia:

King William County Schools

Regional Adult & Career Education, Wise Co  
Schools

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors  
(TAPS)

Virginia ACTE

Virginia Community College System

Washington:

FuturesNW

Informed Citizenry

International Association of Machinists and  
Aerospace Workers (IAM) 751

Libraries of Stevens County

Northwest Education Access

Seattle Jobs Initiative

United Way of King County

Washington Anti-Hunger & Nutrition  
Coalition

Washington Association for Career and  
Technical Education

Washington State Board for Community and  
Technical Colleges

Washington Student Association

Wisconsin:

Midwest Urban Strategies, Inc.

Wisconsin Literacy

Wisconsin Technical College District Boards  
Association

Wisconsin Technical College System

Wyoming:

Wind River Family and Community Health  
Care

CC: Senator Patty Murray, Chair, Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions,  
Senator Richard Burr, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and  
Pensions,  
Representative Bobby Scott, Chair, House Committee on Education and Labor,  
Representative Virginia Foxx, Ranking Member, House Committee on Education and Labor,  
Senator Tim Kaine,  
Senator Rob Portman,  
Representative Andy Levin,  
Representative Anthony Gonzalez