

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
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 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:

Aeronautical Repair Station Association

King William County Schools

National Council on Aging

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