

July 16, 2018

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman
Committee on Health, Education
Labor & Pensions
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education
Labor & Pensions
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray:

As community college leaders dedicated to serving students of all backgrounds, we write to share our higher education policy priorities—common-sense initiatives we believe will improve the success rate of today’s learners. We appreciate your leadership on these issues and thank you in advance for your consideration of our feedback.

As you may know, community colleges serve approximately 9 million students every year across the United States—most of whom can be classified as non-traditional. In fact, 75 percent of community college students work either full-or-part-time, 30 percent are parents and 17 percent are single parents. Additionally, many of our students fall outside of the age range of “traditional” students, with an average age of 28 and nearly one in seven students being over the age of 40.

As you can imagine, these individuals often enroll in the higher education system with a different set of objectives than the first-time, full-time students who have consistently been the focus of our nation’s higher education policies. Recent research suggests that 60 percent of today’s postsecondary students identify job or career outcomes as their primary motivation for enrolling in higher education, and a growing number of students are attending school while balancing work and family obligations.

For these reasons, we strongly believe that federal higher education policy should be modernized to reflect the real needs of today’s community college students and we urge you to consider the following legislative proposals:

Eliminate the bias against working learners in need of federal financial aid

In 1973, only 28 percent of all jobs called for education or training beyond the high school level. Today, approximately 80 percent of all jobs require some form of postsecondary education or training—including the more than 50 percent of jobs that are “middle-skill,” requiring more than a high school diploma, but not a four-year degree. Despite this demand for skills, most federal financial aid is reserved for programs that are at least 600 clock hours of instruction over a minimum of 15 weeks. This policy is at odds with the realities of today’s postsecondary education landscape, where many students are seeking to enroll in short-term programs that lead to in-demand credentials.

Due to this arbitrary “seat-time” requirement in the Higher Education Act (HEA), working adults and other students who choose to enroll in short-term credit or noncredit programs must pay out of pocket to cover the cost of attendance or commit to an academic program that meets financial aid requirements—even if it will not help them succeed in their chosen field. To address this inequity, Senators Kaine (D-VA) and Portman (R-OH) introduced the Jumpstarting our Businesses by Supporting Students (JOBS) Act (S.206); a bipartisan bill that expands Pell grant eligibility to students enrolled in employer-approved, short-term programs that are at least 150 clock hours of instruction over a period of at least 8 weeks. If signed into law, legislation like the JOBS Act would pave the way for more individuals to fill in-demand jobs in our 21st century economy.

Make higher education and workforce outcomes data comprehensive and transparent

As educators and administrators, we do our best to help students make the best decisions for their futures. However, due to existing legal restrictions on the collection of student-level data, today’s students have no reliable way of knowing what they can expect from specific programs in terms of employment and earnings.

Currently, postsecondary institutions are required to report information to the Department of Education through multiple surveys rather than sharing consistent student level data; a practice that is both burdensome and ineffective. Additionally, the federal government only requires colleges to report data on students receiving Title IV financial aid—leaving the public without a clear picture of program outcomes.

To help provide consumers with better data and relieve institutions of duplicative reporting requirements, Senators Hatch (R-UT), Warren (D-MA), Cassidy (R-LA) and Whitehouse (D-RI) and Representatives Mitchell (R-MI) and Polis (D-CO), introduced the College Transparency Act (S.1121, H.R. 2434). This proposal would establish a secure, privacy-protected postsecondary student level data network administered by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), to which colleges would be able to safely and easily report their data. The bill also protects students by barring the sale of any student data, collection of this data by any other federal agency, the use of this data by law enforcement or outside entity, and the creation of a Federal ranking or ratings system. Increasing data transparency at the federal level would serve to equip individuals working to improve their lives through education and training with the comprehensive information they deserve.

Ensure the success of today's college students by strengthening support services

Since the majority of today's jobs require workers to have education or training beyond a high school diploma, an increasing number of working adults and other nontraditional students are entering the higher education system—a trend that is even more pronounced at community colleges. Due to the diversity of this growing student population, support services such as career counseling, childcare and transportation assistance are increasingly important. While the HEA currently authorizes some student support programs such as the Child Care Access Means Parents in School Program (CCAMPIS) and TRIO, they lack the capacity to remove the wide range of barriers working students can face.

In an effort to bridge this “opportunity gap”, states and higher education leaders across the country are stepping in to implement innovative career pathway models that provide nontraditional students with the services they need to succeed in the postsecondary education system, including educational and career guidance, access to housing, transportation and childcare, and basic skills instruction to help working adults shorten their program completion time.

To strengthen and expand career pathway models at the federal level, Senator Hassan (D-NH), along with Senators Kaine (D-VA), Shaheen (D-NH) and Reed (D-RI) recently introduced the Gateway to Careers Act (S. 2407). This bill would make federal funding available on a competitive basis to institutions that are working in partnership to serve students experiencing barriers to postsecondary access and completion. As community college leaders, one of our core missions is to provide access to education for all students regardless of their backgrounds; and initiatives such as the Gateway to Careers Act would help us build upon our ability to do so.

Provide targeted funding for valuable partnerships between community colleges and businesses

Community colleges across the nation work with industries every day to provide high-quality training and academic instruction to future workers. However, Congress has not invested in these community college-business partnerships at a scale that would sustain economic competitiveness since the expiration of the Trade Adjustment Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) grant program in FY 2014.

The purpose of the TAAACT grant program, which allocated \$2 billion in funding to states from FY 2011-2014, was to increase the capacity of community colleges to address the challenges of today's workforce through job training for adults and other nontraditional students. Despite the fact that students enrolled in TAACCCT-funded programs earned more than 240,000 industry-recognized credentials over four years, Congress has not allocated additional funds for this program.

Due to the proven impact of community college-business partnerships, we would strongly support any effort by Congress to increase the resources available for these collaboration models—an example of which is the Community College to Career Fund Act (S. 2390). Introduced by Senators Duckworth (D-IL), Smith (D-MN), Kaine (D-VA) and Feinstein (D-CA), this legislation aims to provide academic institutions and businesses with competitive grant funding so that they can continue to work together to deliver valuable educational or career training programs to students and workers.

We greatly appreciate your consideration of our recommendations and look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure the success of our nation's students.

Sincerely,

Jay K. Box, Ed. D., President

Kentucky Community and Technical College System

Dr. Brenda Dann-Messier, Commissioner

Rhode Island Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner

Dr. Glenn DuBois, Chancellor

Virginia Community College System

Ross Gittell, Chancellor

Community College System of New Hampshire

Dr. Andrea Mayfield, Executive Director

Mississippi Community College Board

Mark E. Ojakian, President

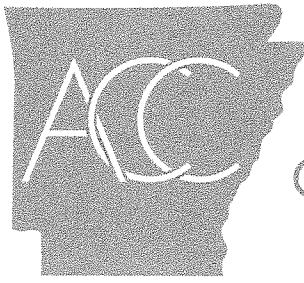
Connecticut State Colleges and Universities

Dr. Thom Reilly, Chancellor

Nevada System of Higher Education

Dr. Monty Sullivan, President

Louisiana Community and Technical College System



ARKANSAS COMMUNITY COLLEGES

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May 31, 2018

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For these reasons, I strongly encourage shaping higher education policy to reflect the real needs of today's community college students.

Eliminate the unfair restrictions toward working learners in need of federal financial aid

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In an effort to bridge this “opportunity gap”, states and higher education leaders across the country are stepping in to implement innovative career pathway models that provide nontraditional students with the services they need to succeed in the postsecondary education system, including educational and career guidance, access to housing, transportation and childcare, and basic skills instruction to help working adults shorten their program completion time.

To strengthen and expand career pathway models at the federal level, Senator Hassan (D-NH), along with Senators Kaine (D-VA), Shaheen (D-NH) and Reed (D-RI) recently introduced the Gateway to Careers Act (S. 2407). This bill would make federal funding available on a competitive basis to institutions that are working in partnership to serve students experiencing barriers to postsecondary access and completion. As community college leaders, one of our core missions is to provide access to education for all students regardless of their backgrounds; and initiatives such as the Gateway to Careers Act would help us build upon our ability to do so. This legislation would utilize the very successful Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative model and duplicate a similar case-management style to other populations. Research indicates that these services to students leads to wage increases, increased tax revenues, and a reduction in public assistance benefits as well as a significant return on investment to the state.

Provide targeted funding for valuable partnerships between community colleges and businesses

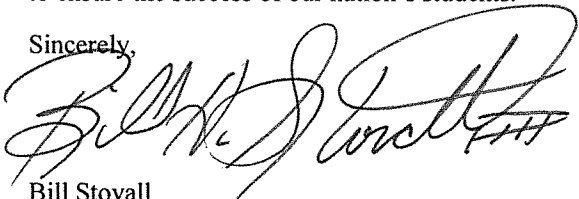
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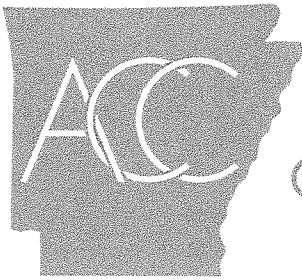
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We greatly appreciate your consideration of our recommendations and look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure the success of our nation’s students.

Sincerely,

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Bill Stovall
Executive Director, Arkansas Community Colleges



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As you can imagine, our students often enroll with a different set of objectives than first-time, full-time students. Recent research suggests that 60 percent of today's postsecondary students identify job or career outcomes as their primary motivation for enrolling in higher education, and a growing number of students are attending school while balancing work and family obligations.

For these reasons, I strongly encourage shaping higher education policy to reflect the real needs of today's community college students.

Eliminate the unfair restrictions toward working learners in need of federal financial aid

In 1973, only 28 percent of all jobs called for education or training beyond the high school level. Today, approximately 80 percent of all jobs require some form of postsecondary education or training—including the more than 50 percent of jobs that are “middle-skill,” requiring more than a high school diploma, but not a four-year degree. Despite this demand for skills, most federal financial aid is reserved for programs that are at least 600 clock hours of instruction over a minimum of 15 weeks. This policy is at odds with the realities of today's postsecondary education landscape, where many students are seeking to enroll in short-term programs that lead to in-demand credentials.

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This legislation aligns with Arkansas's Strategic Plan to raise enrollment and graduation rates of secondary and post-secondary students in in-demand fields and to align education and economic development initiatives with the needs of business in the state.

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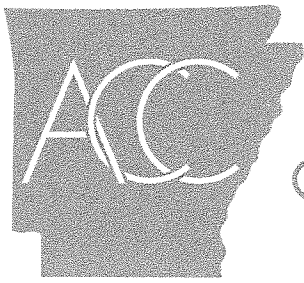
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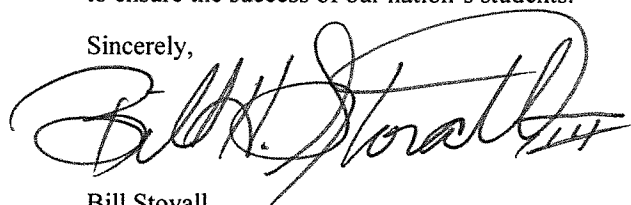
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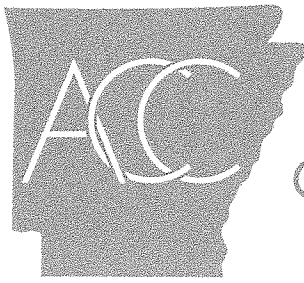
We greatly appreciate your consideration of our recommendations and look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure the success of our nation's students.

Sincerely,

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Bill Stovall

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ARKANSAS COMMUNITY COLLEGES

BILL H. STOVALL, III
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

COLLIN CALLAWAY
CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER

IVÓN Z. GRANALDI
PROGRAM ASSOCIATE

ELLEN SULLIVAN
PROJECT COORDINATOR

MIKE LEACH
DIRECTOR
CENTER FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

KYLA WATERS
DIRECTOR
CENTER FOR WORKFORCE

May 31, 2018

Congressman Bruce Westerman
130 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Westerman:

As a community college advocate dedicated to serving students of all backgrounds, I wanted to personally share our higher education policy priorities that I believe will improve the success rate of today's learners. I appreciate your leadership and public service and thank you in advance for your consideration of our feedback.

Community colleges serve approximately 9 million students every year across the United States, with Arkansas serving nearly 80,000—most of whom can be classified as non-traditional. In fact, 75 percent of community college students work either full-or-part-time, 30 percent are parents and 17 percent are single parents. Additionally, many of Arkansas's students fall outside of the age range of "traditional" students, with an average age of 27.

As you can imagine, our students often enroll with a different set of objectives than first-time, full-time students. Recent research suggests that 60 percent of today's postsecondary students identify job or career outcomes as their primary motivation for enrolling in higher education, and a growing number of students are attending school while balancing work and family obligations.

For these reasons, I strongly encourage shaping higher education policy to reflect the real needs of today's community college students.

Eliminate the unfair restrictions toward working learners in need of federal financial aid

In 1973, only 28 percent of all jobs called for education or training beyond the high school level. Today, approximately 80 percent of all jobs require some form of postsecondary education or training—including the more than 50 percent of jobs that are "middle-skill," requiring more than a high school diploma, but not a four-year degree. Despite this demand for skills, most federal financial aid is reserved for programs that are at least 600 clock hours of instruction over a minimum of 15 weeks. This policy is at odds with the realities of today's postsecondary education landscape, where many

students are seeking to enroll in short-term programs that lead to in-demand credentials.

Due to this clock hour requirement in the Higher Education Act (HEA), working adults and other students who choose to enroll in short-term credit or noncredit programs must pay out of pocket to cover the cost of attendance or commit to an academic program that meets financial aid requirements—even if it is not necessary to succeed in their chosen field. To address these concerns, Senators Kaine (D-VA) and Portman (R-OH) introduced the Jumpstarting our Businesses by Supporting Students (JOBS) Act (S.206); a bipartisan bill that expands Pell grant eligibility to students enrolled in employer-approved, short-term programs that are at least 150 clock hours of instruction over a period of at least eight weeks. If signed into law, legislation like the JOBS Act would pave the way for more individuals to fill in-demand jobs in our 21st century economy.

This legislation aligns with Arkansas’s Strategic Plan to raise enrollment and graduation rates of secondary and post-secondary students in in-demand fields and to align education and economic development initiatives with the needs of business in the state.

Make higher education and workforce outcomes data comprehensive and transparent

As educators and administrators, we do our best to help students make the best decisions for their futures. However, due to existing legal restrictions on the collection of student-level data, today’s students have no reliable way of knowing what they can expect from specific programs in terms of employment and earnings.

Currently, postsecondary institutions are required to report information to the Department of Education through multiple surveys rather than sharing consistent student level data; a practice that is both burdensome and ineffective. Additionally, the federal government only requires colleges to report data on students receiving Title IV financial aid—leaving the public without a clear picture of program outcomes.

To help provide consumers with better data and relieve institutions of duplicative reporting requirements, Senators Hatch (R-UT), Warren (D-MA), Cassidy (R-LA) and Whitehouse (D-RI) and Representatives Mitchell (R-MI) and Polis (D-CO), introduced the College Transparency Act (S.1121, H.R. 2434). This proposal would establish a secure, privacy-protected postsecondary student level data network administered by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), to which colleges would be able to safely and easily report their data. The bill also protects students by barring the sale of any student data, collection of this data by any other federal agency, the use of this data by law enforcement or outside entity, and the creation of a Federal ranking or ratings system. Increasing data transparency at the federal level would serve to equip individuals working to improve their lives through education and training with the comprehensive information they deserve.

Ensure the success of today’s college students by strengthening support services

Since the majority of today’s jobs require workers to have education or training beyond a high school diploma, an increasing number of working adults and other nontraditional students are entering the higher education system—a trend that is even more pronounced at community colleges. Due to the diversity of this growing student population, support services such as career counseling, childcare and transportation assistance are increasingly important. While the HEA currently authorizes some student support programs such as the Child Care Access Means Parents in School Program (CCAMPIS) and TRIO (Upward Bound, Talent Search, and Student Support Service), they lack the capacity to remove the wide range of barriers working students can face.

In an effort to bridge this “opportunity gap”, states and higher education leaders across the country are stepping in to implement innovative career pathway models that provide nontraditional students with the services they need to succeed in the postsecondary education system, including educational and career guidance, access to housing, transportation and childcare, and basic skills instruction to help working adults shorten their program completion time.

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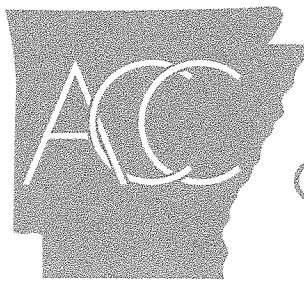
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KYLA WATERS
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May 31, 2018

Congressman French Hill
1229 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

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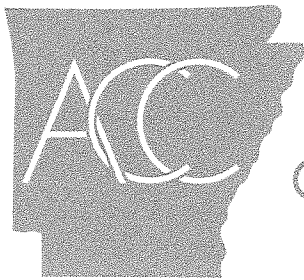
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CENTER FOR WORKFORCE

May 31, 2018

Congressman Rick Crawford
2422 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

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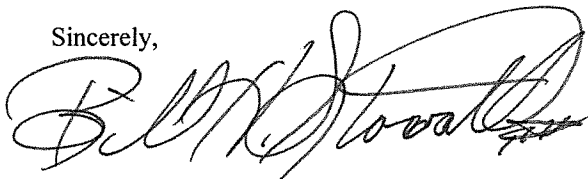
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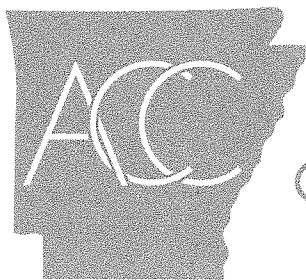
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May 31, 2018

Senator Tom Cotton
124 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

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To strengthen and expand career pathway models at the federal level, Senator Hassan (D-NH), along with Senators Kaine (D-VA), Shaheen (D-NH) and Reed (D-RI) recently introduced the Gateway to Careers Act (S. 2407). This bill would make federal funding available on a competitive basis to institutions that are working in partnership to serve students experiencing barriers to postsecondary access and completion. As community college leaders, one of our core missions is to provide access to education for all students regardless of their backgrounds; and initiatives such as the Gateway to Careers Act would help us build upon our ability to do so. This legislation would utilize the very successful Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative model and duplicate a similar case-management style to other populations. Research indicates that these services to students leads to wage increases, increased tax revenues, and a reduction in public assistance benefits as well as a significant return on investment to the state.

Provide targeted funding for valuable partnerships between community colleges and businesses

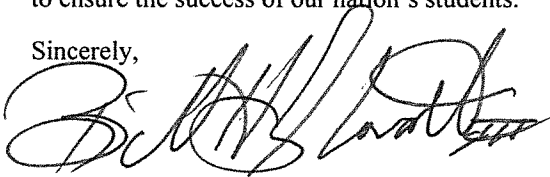
Community colleges across the nation work with industries every day to provide high-quality training and academic instruction to future workers. However, Congress has not invested in these community college-business partnerships at a scale that would sustain economic competitiveness since the expiration of the Trade Adjustment Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) grant program in FY 2014.

The purpose of the TAAACT grant program, which allocated \$2 billion in funding to states from FY 2011-2014, was to increase the capacity of community colleges to address the challenges of today's workforce through job training for adults and other nontraditional students. In Arkansas, over \$31 million was awarded in four separate grants during this time period, leading to nearly 4,000 credentials from over 200 training programs and touching over 11,000 participants. Nationally, students enrolled in TAACCCT-funded programs earned more than 240,000 industry-recognized credentials over four years.

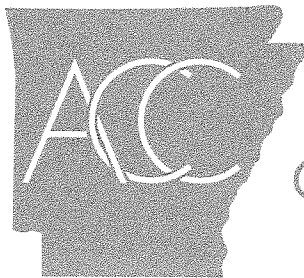
Due to the proven impact of community college-business partnerships, we would strongly support any effort by Congress to increase the resources available for these collaboration models—an example of which is the Community College to Career Fund Act (S. 2390). Introduced by Senators Duckworth (D-IL), Smith (D-MN), Kaine (D-VA) and Feinstein (D-CA), this legislation aims to provide academic institutions and businesses with competitive grant funding so that they can continue to work together to deliver valuable educational or career training programs to students and workers.

We greatly appreciate your consideration of our recommendations and look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure the success of our nation's students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Stovall", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Bill Stovall
Executive Director, Arkansas Community Colleges



ARKANSAS COMMUNITY COLLEGES

BILL H. STOVALL, III
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

COLLIN CALLAWAY
CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER

IVÓN Z. GRANALDI
PROGRAM ASSOCIATE

ELLEN SULLIVAN
PROJECT COORDINATOR

MIKE LEACH
DIRECTOR
CENTER FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

KYLA WATERS
DIRECTOR
CENTER FOR WORKFORCE

May 31, 2018

Senator John Boozman
141 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Boozman:

As a community college advocate dedicated to serving students of all backgrounds, I wanted to personally share our higher education policy priorities that I believe will improve the success rate of today's learners. I appreciate your leadership and public service and thank you in advance for your consideration of our feedback.

Community colleges serve approximately 9 million students every year across the United States, with Arkansas serving nearly 80,000—most of whom can be classified as non-traditional. In fact, 75 percent of community college students work either full-or-part-time, 30 percent are parents and 17 percent are single parents. Additionally, many of Arkansas's students fall outside of the age range of "traditional" students, with an average age of 27.

As you can imagine, our students often enroll with a different set of objectives than first-time, full-time students. Recent research suggests that 60 percent of today's postsecondary students identify job or career outcomes as their primary motivation for enrolling in higher education, and a growing number of students are attending school while balancing work and family obligations.

For these reasons, I strongly encourage shaping higher education policy to reflect the real needs of today's community college students.

Eliminate the unfair restrictions toward working learners in need of federal financial aid

In 1973, only 28 percent of all jobs called for education or training beyond the high school level. Today, approximately 80 percent of all jobs require some form of postsecondary education or training—including the more than 50 percent of jobs that are "middle-skill," requiring more than a high school diploma, but not a four-year degree. Despite this demand for skills, most federal financial aid is reserved for programs that are at least 600 clock hours of instruction over a minimum of 15 weeks. This policy is at odds with the realities of today's postsecondary education landscape, where many

students are seeking to enroll in short-term programs that lead to in-demand credentials.

Due to this clock hour requirement in the Higher Education Act (HEA), working adults and other students who choose to enroll in short-term credit or noncredit programs must pay out of pocket to cover the cost of attendance or commit to an academic program that meets financial aid requirements—even if it is not necessary to succeed in their chosen field. To address these concerns, Senators Kaine (D-VA) and Portman (R-OH) introduced the Jumpstarting our Businesses by Supporting Students (JOBS) Act (S.206); a bipartisan bill that expands Pell grant eligibility to students enrolled in employer-approved, short-term programs that are at least 150 clock hours of instruction over a period of at least eight weeks. If signed into law, legislation like the JOBS Act would pave the way for more individuals to fill in-demand jobs in our 21st century economy.

This legislation aligns with Arkansas's Strategic Plan to raise enrollment and graduation rates of secondary and post-secondary students in in-demand fields and to align education and economic development initiatives with the needs of business in the state.

Make higher education and workforce outcomes data comprehensive and transparent

As educators and administrators, we do our best to help students make the best decisions for their futures. However, due to existing legal restrictions on the collection of student-level data, today's students have no reliable way of knowing what they can expect from specific programs in terms of employment and earnings.

Currently, postsecondary institutions are required to report information to the Department of Education through multiple surveys rather than sharing consistent student level data; a practice that is both burdensome and ineffective. Additionally, the federal government only requires colleges to report data on students receiving Title IV financial aid—leaving the public without a clear picture of program outcomes.

To help provide consumers with better data and relieve institutions of duplicative reporting requirements, Senators Hatch (R-UT), Warren (D-MA), Cassidy (R-LA) and Whitehouse (D-RI) and Representatives Mitchell (R-MI) and Polis (D-CO), introduced the College Transparency Act (S.1121, H.R. 2434). This proposal would establish a secure, privacy-protected postsecondary student level data network administered by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), to which colleges would be able to safely and easily report their data. The bill also protects students by barring the sale of any student data, collection of this data by any other federal agency, the use of this data by law enforcement or outside entity, and the creation of a Federal ranking or ratings system. Increasing data transparency at the federal level would serve to equip individuals working to improve their lives through education and training with the comprehensive information they deserve.

Ensure the success of today's college students by strengthening support services

Since the majority of today's jobs require workers to have education or training beyond a high school diploma, an increasing number of working adults and other nontraditional students are entering the higher education system—a trend that is even more pronounced at community colleges. Due to the diversity of this growing student population, support services such as career counseling, childcare and transportation assistance are increasingly important. While the HEA currently authorizes some student support programs such as the Child Care Access Means Parents in School Program (CCAMPIS) and TRIO (Upward Bound, Talent Search, and Student Support Service), they lack the capacity to remove the wide range of barriers working students can face.

In an effort to bridge this “opportunity gap”, states and higher education leaders across the country are stepping in to implement innovative career pathway models that provide nontraditional students with the services they need to succeed in the postsecondary education system, including educational and career guidance, access to housing, transportation and childcare, and basic skills instruction to help working adults shorten their program completion time.

To strengthen and expand career pathway models at the federal level, Senator Hassan (D-NH), along with Senators Kaine (D-VA), Shaheen (D-NH) and Reed (D-RI) recently introduced the Gateway to Careers Act (S. 2407). This bill would make federal funding available on a competitive basis to institutions that are working in partnership to serve students experiencing barriers to postsecondary access and completion. As community college leaders, one of our core missions is to provide access to education for all students regardless of their backgrounds; and initiatives such as the Gateway to Careers Act would help us build upon our ability to do so. This legislation would utilize the very successful Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative model and duplicate a similar case-management style to other populations. Research indicates that these services to students leads to wage increases, increased tax revenues, and a reduction in public assistance benefits as well as a significant return on investment to the state.

Provide targeted funding for valuable partnerships between community colleges and businesses

Community colleges across the nation work with industries every day to provide high-quality training and academic instruction to future workers. However, Congress has not invested in these community college-business partnerships at a scale that would sustain economic competitiveness since the expiration of the Trade Adjustment Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) grant program in FY 2014.

The purpose of the TAAACT grant program, which allocated \$2 billion in funding to states from FY 2011-2014, was to increase the capacity of community colleges to address the challenges of today's workforce through job training for adults and other nontraditional students. In Arkansas, over \$31 million was awarded in four separate grants during this time period, leading to nearly 4,000 credentials from over 200 training programs and touching over 11,000 participants. Nationally, students enrolled in TAACCCT-funded programs earned more than 240,000 industry-recognized credentials over four years.

Due to the proven impact of community college-business partnerships, we would strongly support any effort by Congress to increase the resources available for these collaboration models—an example of which is the Community College to Career Fund Act (S. 2390). Introduced by Senators Duckworth (D-IL), Smith (D-MN), Kaine (D-VA) and Feinstein (D-CA), this legislation aims to provide academic institutions and businesses with competitive grant funding so that they can continue to work together to deliver valuable educational or career training programs to students and workers.

We greatly appreciate your consideration of our recommendations and look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure the success of our nation's students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Stovall", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Bill Stovall
Executive Director, Arkansas Community Colleges

CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE

1102 Q STREET, SUITE 4400

SACRAMENTO, CA 95811-6549

(916) 322-4005

<http://www.cccco.edu>

July 13, 2018

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman
Committee on Health, Education
Labor & Pensions
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education
Labor & Pensions
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray:

The California Community Colleges is the largest system of public higher education in the United States. Our 114 colleges across 72 districts serve 2.1 million students; who represent two-thirds of the undergraduate students in the state of California and one-fifth of the community college students in the nation. Our colleges are founded on the principles of open access, affordability, and quality. We believe that all students should have the opportunity to reach their full potential, and our continued partnership with the federal government is a key component of the success of our colleges and students.

In September of 2017, the California Community Colleges Board of Governors approved the [Vision for Success](#) and within it six overarching goals for our system. These goals focus on increasing the number of students who complete their transfer and career goals, supporting students in obtaining high-demand, high-wage jobs, and closing achievement gaps across the regions of our state and for our traditionally underserved students. In adopting the 2018-19 Budget Act, the California Legislature and Governor approved a series of policy and funding changes that will support our system in achieving these goals. The Budget Act included a new [Student Centered Funding Formula](#) that, for the first time in our state, will incentivize access *and* outcomes for our students, with an emphasis on our low-income and underserved student populations. The California Budget Act also provided \$120 Million to create the [115th California Community College](#), focused on serving adult learners in achieving short-term skills training. This online, competency-based, personalized approach aims to provide the estimated 2 million California "stranded workers" with access to high quality, low-cost educational options that will support upward mobility. With the adoption of the 2018-19 Budget Act, California's state leaders have truly delivered on a promise to put students first and support the social and economic needs of California and the nation.

Our success in California is dependent on our continued partnership with the Federal government, and a Higher Education Act that supports experimentation and innovation while appropriately balancing thoughtful accountability and protection for students and taxpayers. It is with these objectives in mind that, on behalf of the System Office of the California Community Colleges, I respectfully submit the following comments regarding the Higher Education Act (HEA) reauthorization.

Expand access to student level data to support accountability and program improvement

California has made great strides to expand access to data that allows students and the public to receive accurate, relevant, and representative information, to know what they can expect in return for their investment of time and money. However, California and our institutions have a difficult time providing complete information because only the federal government has access to complete earnings information. The current federal limitation on data collection for only students who receive federal financial aid is problematic for purposes of disclosure, accountability, and program and institutional improvement.

Federal investment in postsecondary education benefits all students at recipient institutions, not only those who participate in federal grant and loan programs. In addition to Title IV aid, the federal government supports institutions of higher education through research grants from the National Institutes of Health and National Science Foundation, among other agencies, as well as through Title III and Title V programs, which authorize funding and general support for Minority Serving Institutions. Students—even those who don't receive Pell Grants or student loans—often benefit from further federal investment like the American Opportunity Tax Credit and other exemptions and deductions, which provide tax relief for students and their families while attending college, and GI Bill benefits and the Tuition Assistance Program, which provide financial assistance to veterans and service members. If federal data systems exclude students who do not receive federal student aid, the data will not reflect the scope of outcomes for students who benefit from other federal investments that enable institutions to operate.

To help provide consumers with better data and relieve institutions of duplicative reporting requirements, Senators Hatch (R-UT), Warren (D-MA), Cassidy (R-LA) and Whitehouse (D-RI) and Representatives Mitchell (R-MI) and Polis (D-CO), introduced the College Transparency Act (S.1121, H.R. 2434). This proposal would establish a secure, privacy-protected postsecondary student level data network administered by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), to which colleges would be able to safely and efficiently report their data. The bill also protects students by barring the sale of any student data, the collection of this data by any other federal agency, the use of this data by law enforcement or outside entity, and the creation of a Federal ranking or ratings system. Increasing data transparency at the federal level would serve to equip individuals working to improve their lives through education and training with the comprehensive information they deserve.

Strengthen financial aid and provide aid for working learners in high-quality short-term programs

California has the largest “free tuition” program in the nation; nearly half of all community college students, and 70 percent of full-time students, receive tuition waivers under the California College Promise Grant. Yet, low- and middle-income students face substantial financial barriers to completion. Over a third of our students experience housing insecurity and 12 percent experience food scarcity. Inadequate financial aid forces students to take fewer classes or work extended hours; these choices make them less likely to be academically successful. Increased access to and funding for federal programs including Pell Grants, the Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (SEOG), and on campus programs such as the Child Care Access Means Parents in School Program (CCAMPIS) and TRIO are essential to reducing debt burdens and increasing college completion for community college students.

Enhancing access to short-term educational programs also offers great promise in helping our state support the needs of approximately 2.5 million working poor Californians, ages 25 to 34 whose highest educational attainment is either high school or some college. The California online college, along with increased short-term programs at our existing 114 California Community Colleges, will provide stranded workers with affordable, high-quality skills programs that enable them to achieve greater economic and social mobility. Allowing students in these short-term educational programs to be eligible for Pell Grants and other student services has the potential to provide significant benefits to students seeking educational and training opportunities.

To protect the taxpayers' investment and ensure students are receiving the knowledge and skills needed for our workforce, expanded access to Pell Grants should be accompanied by accountability measures that ensure short-term programs have strong labor market outcomes. Accountability is necessary to ensure we maintain public trust in postsecondary education, protect students and taxpayer investments; and, to assure industry and employers that our postsecondary system is providing the knowledge, skills, and talent to meet their needs, critical to our competitiveness as a country. California has recently established metrics for evaluating workforce programs that could be a model for quality assurance in career- and short-term Pell programs. Our Strong Workforce Program recognizes “workforce stars,” which are programs where graduates experienced significant wage increases, attainment of regional living wages, and/or placement in the field of study. These data points are publicly available at http://dwms Showcase.com/workforce_stars.asp and can be used to evaluate programs and help students make enrollment decisions. For federal financial aid purposes, particularly for higher education sectors that have experienced widespread fraud and abuse, student debt and earnings metrics would be an important factor to incorporate in program eligibility.

I appreciate the effort by Senators Kaine (D-VA) and Portman (R-OH), the Jumpstarting Our Businesses by Supporting Students (JOBS) Act (S.206), to expand Pell grant eligibility to students enrolled in employer-approved, short-term programs that are at least 150 clock hours of instruction over a period of at least 8 weeks. The effort to strengthen and expand career pathway models at the federal level, by Senator Hassan (D-NH), along with Senators Kaine (D-VA), Shaheen (D-NH) and Reed (D-RI) through the Gateway to Careers Act (S. 2407), is also commendable. When accompanied by meaningful accountability to ensure colleges and programs are using public funds responsibly, and that a robust oversight structure protects against the abuses of bad actors, these changes could help meet the needs of students and the future economy.

Target funding to support community college and business partnerships

The [California Strong Workforce Program](#) provides state-level funding and structure to support collaboration between California's Community Colleges and industries throughout the state. Through regional education and workforce partnerships, the program provides high-quality training and academic instruction to future workers. While state investments have spurred innovation in this arena, additional federal incentives and investments would sustain greater economic competitiveness. The Trade Adjustment Community College and Career Training (TAACT) grant program, which allocated \$2 billion in funding to states from FY 2011-2014, increased the capacity of community colleges to address the challenges of today's workforce through job training for adults and other nontraditional students. Although students enrolled in TAACCCT-funded programs earned more than 240,000 industry-recognized credentials over four years, Congress has not allocated additional funds for this program. Due to the proven impact of community college-business partnerships, I support efforts by Congress to increase the resources available for these collaboration models. The Community College to Career Fund Act (S. 2390), introduced by Senators Duckworth (D-IL), Smith (D-MN), Kaine (D-VA) and Feinstein (D-CA), provides a model worthy of consideration. Under the Community College to Career Fund Act, academic institutions and businesses with competitive grant funding work together to deliver valuable educational or career training programs to students and workers.

Provide robust accountability and quality assurance

Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act provides an opportunity to enhance and update Federal Student Aid programs, and provide vital resources to low- and moderate-income students that ensure the opportunity to enroll in and succeed at our institutions. In turn, colleges have a responsibility to work towards strong outcomes for our students and be good stewards of public funds. An accountability structure that provides for appropriate expenditures of public funds and student protections from poor performing colleges and programs must accompany an expansion of financial aid programs. In recent years, far too many students enroll in career-training programs with the promise of high-wage jobs, only to find themselves with a credential not valued in the market place and insurmountable student loan debt. Congress should ensure that all colleges that participate in the Federal Student Aid program are using public funds responsibly and that a robust, transparent, accountability and oversight structure protects against the abuses of bad actors.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments. If you have questions or need additional information, please contact Laura Metune, Vice Chancellor of Government Relations, at (916) 323-5951 or lmetulan@ccccco.cccco.edu.

Sincerely,



Eloy Ortiz Oakley
Chancellor

cc: Members of the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, & Pensions