

2022 COMMUNITY COLLEGE FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Enact Community College Priorities in the Build Back Better Act

Authorize and Fund Key Community College Priorities Included in Reconciliation Bill

Congressional Democrats' FY 2022 budget reconciliation legislation proposal, the Build Back Better Act, would make critical investments in community colleges and their students that would boost the economy and create greater opportunity. We urge Congress to maintain these priorities in any relevant legislative vehicles. The provisions include investments to make higher education more accessible and affordable; additional institutional support; and investment in workforce programs. The proposals are outlined in greater detail below.

Support Dreamers

Enact the Dream Act

Enact the Dream Act, once and for all, to give Dreamers permanent legal status. The Dream Act provides a path to citizenship for undocumented young people, including the thousands of students currently enrolled in the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. Dreamers were brought to the U.S. as minors and frequently know no other nation besides America. More importantly, they can make substantial contributions to the U.S. economy and society. Dreamers should also be able to access Title IV student aid funding, as is provided in the House's Build Back Better Act.

Authorize a Community College Led Job Training Program

Fund a Community College Led Program that Links Training to Jobs

The pandemic's massive economic dislocation has exacerbated the need for a dedicated community college job training program that integrates institutional programs with business and local workforce needs. While today's economy still has millions of jobs available for qualified applicants, colleges lack the funding to adequately address the situation. Community colleges call for an investment that builds on the demonstrated success of the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) grant program, which tightly linked training programs to jobs. The Back Better Act provided \$1.2 billion for TAACCCT program and created an extremely important \$4.9 billion community college-industry workforce training program at the Department of Education.

Fund Key Education and Workforce Programs

Support Student Access and Success

Boost the Pell Grant maximum award substantially, and provide annual inflationary increases to the maximum award, leading to an eventual doubling of the grant. Pell Grants enable millions of low-income students to pay tuition and fees and meet other college expenses. Increasing the maximum award promotes affordability for low-income students, reducing their need to borrow. We are supportive of the Build Back Better Act's \$550 increase to the maximum and the proposed \$400 maximum grant increase included in FY 2022 Appropriations legislation.

Funding increases should also be provided for the Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (SEOG), Federal Work-Study, TRIO, GEAR UP, and Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) programs.

Strengthen Under-Resourced Institutions

Increase funding for institutional aid programs including: Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), Title III-A Strengthening Institutions; Strengthening Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs); Tribal Colleges; and other programs serving traditionally underrepresented populations.

Bolster Job Training and Career and Technical Education

Continue to support community college training programs that lead to jobs in in-demand industries by increasing funding to \$105 million (as in House-passed legislation) for the Strengthening Community College Training Grants program administered by the Department of Labor.

Enhance funding for Perkins Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs, Adult Basic and Literacy Education State Grants, state grants under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), and the National Science Foundation's Advanced Technological Education (ATE) program.

Reauthorize the Higher Education Act for Today's Colleges and Students

Work with States to Make Community College Universally Accessible, Promoting Student Success

Establish a federal-state partnership to create tuition-free community college. Postsecondary education is now essential to generate family-sustaining wages and the community colleges are the best route to making college universal. States should be incentivized to sustain and enhance their support of higher education as the federal government helps make community college available to all.

An aligned national program to enhance community college student access and success will help ensure increased economic mobility and help sustain economic growth and positively transform higher education.

Support Pell Grants for Students in Short-Term Workforce Programs

Currently, a program must be two-thirds of a year in length to qualify for Pell Grants. Community colleges offer many short-term workforce-oriented programs that provide great benefit to both individuals and local businesses. However, these programs cannot be accessed because of cost. Pell Grant eligibility for shorter-term programs should be established, with quality standards set in place. To achieve this, community colleges strongly support the JOBS Act. The JOBS Act would lower the threshold for Pell Grant eligibility to 150 clock hours and therefore enable more individuals to access training programs for jobs in high-demand fields.

Invest in Basic Needs Supports for Students

The true cost of attending community college extends well beyond tuition. Many community college students still cannot pay for necessities such as food, housing, transportation, child care, and medical expenses. Community colleges support policies that address this by providing greater access to vital basic needs services. Therefore, AACC and ACCT recommend:

- Increasing the capacity of community colleges to connect students with supportive services that will help them persist and succeed in their postsecondary pathways. The Build Back Better Act includes a new Completion Grant that tackles these issues. Title IV programs can be better integrated with income-maintenance programs.
- Strengthening existing federal programs, including the Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), to meet students' true needs.

Focus Student Tax Policy on Those Who Can Benefit Most

End the Taxation of Pell Grants, and Modify the AOTC & LLC

Community Colleges support the "Tax-Free Pell Grant Act," which was included in the House-passed Build Back Better Act as well as the Senate reconciliation proposal. Currently, Pell Grant awards can be taxed for any amounts that exceed a student's tuition and related expenses. This means that community college students must pay tax on any portion of their Pell Grants that is used to help meet living expenses. The Tax-Free Pell Grant Act would rectify this by making Pell Grants non-taxable whether it is used for tuition or other costs of attendance.

The bill would also alter the American Opportunity Tax Credit (AOTC) so that Pell Grant amounts would not be subtracted from a student's eligible expenses. This would dramatically enhance the ability of low-income students to qualify for the credit.

Additionally, the Lifetime Learning Tax Credit (LLC) should be altered to provide 100% of the first \$2,000 of tuition and fees paid by those taking job-focused training courses at community colleges. The LLC has not lived up to its promise of helping America re-skill. This alteration would be a dramatic step forward in federal workforce policy.