

February 27, 2024

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

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

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
Chair, Senate Committee on
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Cassidy
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leaders Schumer and McConnell, Chair Sanders, and Ranking Member Cassidy,

Collectively, we write to encourage the Senate to consider legislation to expand Pell Grant eligibility to high quality short-term education and training programs. We were pleased to note recent bipartisan efforts to prioritize this issue in the House Committee on Education and the Workforce which advanced a bill out of committee this past December.

Currently, eligibility for the Pell Grant program is limited to education and training programs that are at least 600 clock hours (or two-thirds of a typical academic year) and 15 weeks in length. This excludes many high-quality non-degree credentialing opportunities in growing, and high-wage industries, such as health care, manufacturing and IT. This limitation also creates an unnecessary financial barrier for many students and workers who may need to fully incur the costs of these programs in absence of student aid. Expanding the Pell Grant program to shorter term education and training programs will boost economic competitiveness while strengthening local and state economies. It will also help create more affordable and accessible pathways to postsecondary credentials for tens of thousands of students.

We ask the Senate to take action on this important issue in the months ahead. Last summer the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions had planned to markup Senator Kaine and Braun's JOBS Act (S. 161), which has 46 bipartisan co-sponsors, but that markup was indefinitely postponed leaving further action on Workforce Pell uncertain. We believe that it is imperative that the Senate move forward with bipartisan legislation during this final session of this Congress to address access to high-quality education and training opportunities that benefit workers as well as our nation's economy. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Advance CTE
American Association of Community Colleges
Association for Career and Technical Education
Association of Community College Trustees
Higher Learning Advocates
Jobs for the Future
Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies
National Skills Coalition
Rebuilding America's Middle Class (RAMC)
UPCEA