

I am joining my colleagues at Westchester Community College to urge your support for community colleges in the COVID-19 pandemic stimulus package currently being drafted and negotiated in Congress. Community colleges serve a high percentage of Pell-eligible students and students who may be severely impacted by financial hardship during this crisis, including the 30 million unemployed and displaced workers across the country. I respectfully ask that any legislation include the following three priorities:

Institutional and Student Support to Cope with the Pandemic

The CARES Act provided badly needed funding but is not adequate given the challenges colleges are confronting. Community colleges in our region could be facing especially drastic cuts in funding due to consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic given our state's \$10 billion reduction in spending in 2020-2021. Community colleges are an integral part of the economic recovery ahead as a strong start for those transferring to four-year degree programs or those with more immediate employment goals achieved through career technical education or short-term workforce training. For that reason, we support the request for \$46.6 billion to support higher education with \$23.3 billion in direct emergency aid for students and \$23.3 billion in direct support for institutions. The legislation should include strong supplement/not supplant language to ensure that students are not unfairly impacted by severe shortfalls in state budgets.

A Proportional Response to COVID-19 Impact and Reemergence

No region is harder hit by the COVID-19 virus than the areas surrounding New York City. The magnitude of the effect on our region is significant as we continue to have hundreds of deaths and thousands of infections reported daily. Students and employees continue striving to stay healthy, caring for loved ones, and grieving for the loss of loved ones. Federal stimulus should include special allocations for states and regions in proportion to the impact of the pandemic to that state and also based on the potential for that state to contribute to regional and national economic recovery.

Workforce Development Funding for a TAACCCT Successor Program

Community colleges are critical to help build a strong economy and address the pronounced skills gap that emerged in recent years. The sector supports a program modeled on the highly successful Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training Program, or the Strengthening Community College Training Program, created in last year's appropriation legislation. An investment of \$1.0 billion per year for at least two years would sustain a vital workforce education program connected tightly to business.

Thank you for hearing our concerns and advocating for public higher education and community colleges in the latest pandemic stimulus package.