



January 31, 2022

The Honorable Tim Kaine
231 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Braun
404 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Kaine and Braun:

I am writing to express the appreciation of Rebuilding America's Middle Class (RAMC) for your leadership in introducing the JOBS Act of 2023. RAMC recognizes all Americans, especially low-income and unemployed workers, need access to affordable postsecondary training and credentialing opportunities that can have a significant positive impact on their future career and earnings potential. RAMC supports this legislation, as it will open the doors of opportunity for many Americans who are seeking a postsecondary education for employment in a high-wage career field.

RAMC represents more than 120 community colleges and 1.5 million students nationwide. As you know, community colleges serve 45 percent of all first-time freshmen and 40 percent of our students are first-generation college students. Additionally, a significant proportion of our nation's minority undergraduates attend community colleges, including 44.6 percent of all African American undergraduates, 49.7 percent of all Hispanic undergraduates, and 48 percent of Native American undergraduates. Community colleges are open access, seek to make higher education accessible and affordable for everyone and match employers' need for a larger, more diverse workforce. We know the importance of preparing more Americans to enter the workforce with the skills necessary to compete for in-demand jobs, especially during times of economic recession or labor market contraction.

The JOBS Act of 2023 would permit students enrolled at public and nonprofit institutions of higher education (IHEs) to receive Pell grants to cover the cost of programs that are at least 150 clock hours and provide instruction over at least 8 weeks. Presently, Pell grants cannot be awarded for programs of less than 600 clock hours in length. Unfortunately, that leaves many high-quality and in-demand programs as ineligible for Federal grant aid, cutting off the ability for many low-income students to attend programs that can launch them on a path that will allow them to provide for their families and advance in their careers.

The expansion of eligibility for Pell Grants to short-term programs recognizes the shifting relationship between higher education and work in today's economy. Short-term credentials allow for flexible "on-and-off-ramps" so that students gain skills valued by employers and gain access to well-paying jobs in middle-skilled occupations.

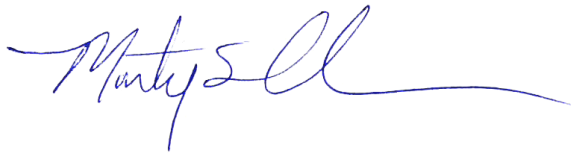
While our colleges are working diligently and creatively to find new outlets to support students and their communities, additional aid from the Federal government is vital to our continued ability to help

students and ensure community colleges across America can continue to respond to our nation's changing education and workforce demands effectively and nimbly.

For many individuals, a short-term credential is the first step towards earning a long-term certificate, an associate degree, or a bachelor's degree. Federal support in such programs has the potential to yield substantial benefits to students and communities and ensures workers are not left behind. If students do not receive additional support from Congress for short-term courses, they will be cut off from quality opportunities, reducing access to postsecondary opportunities for our nation's most vulnerable students.

Thank you for your leadership on this important economic opportunity for Americans. RAMC looks forward to working with you to continue to refine this and other legislation that Congress will move to fund short-term credentials through the Pell grant program during the 118th Congress.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Monty Sullivan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Monty Sullivan
Board President, Rebuilding America's Middle Class (RAMC)
President, Louisiana Community and Technical College System