



December 10, 2025

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The Honorable Nicholas Kent  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Under Secretary Kent

On behalf of Rebuilding America's Middle Class (RAMC), I thank the U.S. Department of Education and the Committee for their work thus far on the implementation of Workforce Pell. As the Department conducts its first session of the Accountability in Higher Education and Access through Demand-driven Workforce Pell (AHEAD) Negotiated Rulemaking Session, RAMC is providing input on Department's regulatory proposal to negotiators that reflects the discussion that the Committee has had over the last two days.

RAMC represents more than 75 community colleges and approximately 1 million students nationwide. Community colleges serve 45 percent of all first-time freshmen and 40 percent of our students are first-generation college students. Community colleges are open access, seek to make higher education accessible and affordable for everyone and match employers' need for a larger, more workforce. We know the importance of preparing more Americans to enter the workforce with the skills necessary to compete for in demand jobs.

RAMC strongly believes that this new authority will be successful only if it is fully operational for students, institutions, governors, and the Department, while ensuring that programs meet the law's accountability requirements. As community college leaders who will implement this new authority on behalf of our students and their eventual employers, we provide input with this operational goal in mind.

RAMC appreciates the work of the Department in proposing thoughtful regulatory language to help ensure the successful implementation of Workforce Pell. We are particularly pleased with provisions which clarify that Workforce Pell Grants can be used to support related training and instruction in apprenticeships as well as draft language outlining the ways in which an eligible workforce program can regain eligibility. The language on how programs can regain eligibility is particularly helpful for programs that may go in and out of compliance due to the value-added earnings and the job placement and completion tests.

We also appreciate the willingness of the Department to engage in meaningful dialogue with stakeholders over the past two days and appreciate the opportunity to lend our voice to several of these specific issues and hope each will be addressed as you work to complete negotiations this week:

- Under the current language, programs would have to wait a year from the date of Governor approval to be eligible for Workforce Pell. While Tuesday's session produced comments from the Department negotiator that the agency intends this language to mean that Governors would be able to determine when programs met statutory regulations in the past and have been in existence under these conditions for at least one year, RAMC urges the Department to make clear that program existence does not begin one year after the approval by a Governor.
- The Department's proposed Governor approval process asks Governors to take on statutory responsibilities, including adjudicating job placement and program completion rates, tasks that the statute envisioned the Secretary performing. States vary in the infrastructure that they have to support Workforce Pell, meaning this process may be more burdensome for some and could raise operational challenges, slowing down the implementation of Workforce Pell. All Governors must have a clear path to implement this authority so that students can quickly access high-quality, high-demand, and high-wage programs that are nimble and responsive to the needs of their communities. We urge the Committee to carefully weigh the operational responsibilities of what the regulations place on Governors while also demanding all of the vigor and expectations for these programs as envisioned by the statute. It's important to keep in mind that Governors and their State agencies will receive no administrative funds to support the data collection requirements needed to administer the role as presently envisioned by the regulatory proposal.
- The current provisions related to job placement accountability would require, after the 2027-2028 award year, the 70 percent job placement rate to be calculated as the percentage of students who are employed in the occupation for which the program prepares students or a comparable high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand occupation, as determined by the Governor. RAMC members see this requirement as extremely difficult to implement as the data does not uniformly exist to meet this test. Subsequently, the of what is "comparable" means is vague and will lead to a lack of uniformity across states and programs. This will likely negatively impact the range of programs that are eligible for Workforce Pell Grants and will increase the difficulty in determining which programs qualify under this language. We ask the Department to eliminate the requirement to calculate placement rates with this occupationally related or comparable requirement.
- Under the definitions section of the proposed language, the Department has included language that prohibits an institution of higher education from offering a Workforce Pell program if it has been subject to suspension, emergency action, or termination action by the Secretary, five years preceding termination. The institutions that will be subject to this regulation would be otherwise Title IV eligible institutions for every other program at the Department. Eligibility for Workforce Pell should not be the required to adhere to a different standard when other Pell Grants and loans are flowing to an institution. We are also concerned that this language unclear as to whether these decisions are final, who is responsible for making these decisions, and what does termination mean in this instance. RAMC strongly urges the Committee to not include this clause, especially as it is not a requirement in the statute.
- Another concern is the requirement that program approval expires when an institution's Program Participation Agreement (PPA) expires. This would require Governors to re-approve previously eligible workforce programs whenever the institution's PPA expires. As a result, an institution could have been approved for a Workforce Pell program, only to have to go through the approval process again just a few months later when its PPA expires. In many cases, the Workforce Pell program at an institution will continue to be the same successful, in-demand

program, making repeated approval redundant and unnecessary. RAMC is concerned that this approach could delay the approval process, divert resources, and delay the effective implementation of Workforce Pell, especially with the scope and complexity that the regulatory proposal already places on Governors.

Again, we greatly appreciate the Department's work over the past two days and consideration of these thoughts as it works to create regulations that implement Workforce Pell effectively and efficiently, while ensuring that eligible programs are high-quality, aligned with in-demand industries, and meet the earnings requirements envisioned by Congress. Thank you for your attention to our views.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Monty Sullivan", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Monty Sullivan

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