



September 24, 2021

The Honorable Bobby Scott
Chairman
House Education and Labor Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
2176 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Scott:

On behalf of America Forward, I am writing to offer our support for the House Committee on Education and Labor's portion of the Build Back Better Act. The America Forward Coalition is made up of more than 100 innovative, high-impact organizations from across the country that are working to solve some of our most pressing challenges in education, workforce development, and poverty alleviation. America Forward unites social innovators with policymakers to advance a public policy agenda that advances equity, fosters innovation, rewards results, catalyzes cross-sector partnerships, and transforms local impact into national change.

We were very encouraged by President Biden's Build Back Better plan because it would direct substantial and much-needed resources to America's education and workforce systems, along with our nation's child care, nutrition, and national service programs. The House Committee on Education and Labor's budget reconciliation bill portion, as passed by the Committee on September 10, would carry forward this step in providing robust investments in our nation's families, workers, students, educators, and school communities.

Specifically, we support provisions within the Committee's portion of the Build Back Better Act that:

- Strengthen our child care system and secure universal pre-K for three- and four-year-olds;
- Provide strong supports for postsecondary students by funding two years of tuition-free community college, increasing the value of Pell Grants, investing in minority serving institutions, and ensuring DREAMERS are eligible for federal student aid;
- Help school districts repair, modernize, or rebuild crumbling and outdated school buildings;
- Support our nation's teachers and school leaders through targeted investments in educator preparation programs like the Augustus F. Hawkins Centers of Excellence program;
- Support post secondary evidence-based student services by investing in a transformative \$9 billion College Retention and Completion Grant program;
- Bolster and improve critical job training programs, including funds for apprenticeship programs and YouthBuild; and
- Expand our most effective child nutrition programs.

As the House of Representatives continues its work on the Build Back Better package, we encourage you to retain these important provisions in the final bill. Additionally, we look forward to working with you and your House and Senate colleagues on strengthening several of the bills' provisions that are important to our Coalition and the communities they serve, including:

- Further increasing the maximum Pell Grant to better match the needs of today's postsecondary students;
- Including meaningful provisions in the workforce programs to require that grant funds be used on evidence-based, rigorously proven approaches, including a set aside that aligns with the outcomes-driven structure of the bipartisan Expanding Pathways for Employment Act; and
- Providing direct funding to Americorps for the establishment and support of the Climate Civilian Corps (CCC) and other Americorps participants, and ensuring that those that serve in the CCC can do so through a community service as well as a workforce development approach.

We cannot ignore the pressing needs of students, workers, families, and nonprofits today, nor can we afford to lose sight of the support that will continue to be necessary in the coming months and years. We appreciate your ongoing work to advance the Build Back Better Act and other COVID-19 related initiatives.

Thank you in advance for considering our views.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deborah Smolover". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Deborah Smolover
Executive Director, America Forward
Managing Partner, New Profit