



October 20, 2021

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bernie Sanders  
Chairman  
Budget Committee  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Yarmuth  
Chairman  
Budget Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
Chairman  
Appropriations Committee  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Chair  
Appropriations Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Chair  
Health, Education, Labor and  
Pensions Committee  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

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

Dear Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, Chairman Sanders, Chairman Yarmuth, Chairman Leahy, Chair DeLauro, Chair Murray and Chairman Scott:

On behalf of America Forward, I am writing to offer our support for the Build Back Better Act; and in particular I would like to highlight a number of specific provisions from the House Committee on Education and Labor's portion as championed by Chairman Scott. 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, will move forward on these important investments for our nation's families, workers, students, educators, and school communities.

Specifically, we support the following provisions 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- Help school districts repair, modernize, or rebuild crumbling and outdated school buildings;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 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 Congress 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 other congressional leaders 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 cursive script that reads "Deborah Smolover". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

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

#### About America Forward

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.