



May 9, 2023

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Chair
House Education and the Workforce Committee
2462 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bobby Scott
Ranking Member
House Education and the Workforce Committee
2328 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
Chair
Senate Health, Education, Labor,
and Pensions Committee
332 Dirksen Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Cassidy
Ranking Member
Senate Health, Education, Labor
and Pensions Committee
455 Dirksen Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Foxx, Ranking Member Scott, Chairman Sanders, and Ranking Member Cassidy,

As members of the America Forward Coalition, we write to express our support for recent efforts in Congress to expand access to Pell Grants for high-quality, short-term workforce-focused programs with demonstrated labor market value, and to share our recommendations regarding program design.

Each of our organizations delivers or helps facilitate programs with a track record of providing economic mobility in high-need fields – ranging from information technology to manufacturing to healthcare. Expanding access to Pell Grants for such high-quality programs is critical given the need to fill in-demand jobs while also expanding opportunities for economic mobility.

As you consider next steps regarding Pell expansion, we urge you to incorporate the following recommendations related to outcomes and program eligibility:

- **Include outcomes-based quality measures.** Any new short-term Pell program should incorporate outcomes-based guardrails, such as earnings-based measures. These measures are essential to protect students and the public, and to clarify the marketplace. We also urge you to engage with practitioners, researchers, and other stakeholders to ensure such measures are practicable.
- **Allow all high-quality providers to participate separate from their Title IV-eligibility or tax status.** We support an outcomes-focused approach that provides access to high-quality providers that demonstrate proven labor market outcomes, regardless of eligibility for Title IV funding as an institution of higher education or the organization's tax status. If non-Title IV providers are not provided direct access, we strongly encourage incorporating language that clearly outlines how such providers can partner with Title IV institutions to offer proven programs.
- **Allow for all types of high-quality programs to participate, including online-only programs.** Online-only programs are an excellent fit for many fields and meet the needs of many students. Excluding these programs poses a substantial equity risk – for student caregivers and others. That said, we recognize that some programs may require in-person learning and support elements; accreditors could confirm that programs are appropriate for distance education to ensure that only high-quality options are eligible.

In addition, to ensure effective implementation, we urge you to prioritize key measures related to data, transparency, and program alignment:

- **Ensure sufficient support for data linkages and transparency.** We strongly support provisions that improve transparency in outcomes and strengthen access to relevant data for stakeholders across the system – ranging from prospective students to providers engaging in navigation support, performance management, and evaluation activities. This data should also be made available in accessible, standardized formats. We urge policymakers to ensure that any bill text sets clear requirements and authority for federal agencies to leverage linked administrative data in a secure, privacy-preserving manner.
- **Enhance job placement requirements through administrative data.** Our organizations highly value job placement data to assess their programs’ outcomes. We encourage policymakers to leverage administrative data to measure job placement rates, in order to reduce the burden on providers to perform surveys and to ensure data is independent and high quality.
- **Facilitate alignment across education and workforce programs.** We support incorporating linkages with other federal education and workforce programs, such as the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, SNAP Employment & Training, and the Perkins Act, to foster a more cohesive system. We encourage policymakers to ensure that these linkages consider potential implementation barriers and offer a leverage point to strengthen quality measures that have been underutilized, such as WIOA state-eligible training provider lists (ETPLs).

We look forward to working with you to advance high-quality, short-term workforce-focused programs in the months ahead. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these recommendations further with your offices.

Thank you,

America Forward
Colorado Equitable Economic Mobility Initiative (CEEMI)
Per Scholas
Project QUEST
Propel America
Social Finance, Inc.
Third Sector Capital Partners
Year Up, Inc.

About Our Organizations

America Forward

America Forward is the Washington, D.C.-based nonpartisan policy initiative of New Profit, a pioneering national venture philanthropy organization that invests in a portfolio of breakthrough social entrepreneurs and systems-change initiatives, catalyzes and builds their impact, and transforms how government and philanthropy pursue social change to ensure that all people can thrive.

America Forward unites social innovators with policymakers to advance a public policy agenda that strengthens equity, fosters innovation, rewards results, catalyzes cross-sector partnerships, and transforms local impact into national change. The America Forward Coalition comprises a network of over 100 social innovation organizations that champion innovative, effective, and efficient solutions to our country's most pressing social problems while working in more than 15,000 communities nationwide. Since 2007, our America Forward Coalition organizations have successfully advocated for lasting policy change in education, workforce development, and evidence-based policy, leveraged \$1.7 billion for social innovation, and driven millions of federal resources toward programs that are achieving measurable results for those who need them most.

Colorado Equitable Economic Mobility Initiative (CEEMI)

CEEMI is a nonprofit that works to scale effective, rigorously evaluated postsecondary and workforce development programs, focusing on public sources of funding, unlocking opportunity for Coloradans in or near poverty. We push for a more evidence-based and less siloed approach to the workforce development ecosystem, by 1) scaling what works, directing public funding to proven workforce development programs; 2) building evidence, helping Colorado training and postsecondary providers and programs advance measure outcomes, access data, & partner with evaluators; and 3) focusing rigorously on equity, centering our approach on addressing systemic barriers to access and opportunity, including specifically learners of color, learners in poverty, and learners with barriers to employment.

Per Scholas

Per Scholas' mission is to advance economic equity through rigorous training for tech careers, and connect skilled talent to leading businesses. We believe that a thriving workforce starts with equitable access to education. By providing skills training and access to employer networks to individuals often excluded from tech careers, Per Scholas envisions a tech workforce as diverse as the customers it serves. Since 1995, Per Scholas has trained 20,000 individuals, helping them build lasting, life-changing skills and careers in technology. With operations in 20+ cities coast-to-coast, historically 85% of Per Scholas learners graduate, and 80% of graduates gain employment within one year of program completion.

Per Scholas' outcomes have twice been proven in randomized and controlled research trials (RCTs) conducted in MDRC's Work Advance study between 2011 and 2020, which concluded that for every \$1 spent on Per Scholas training, \$8 is returned to the local economy through reduction of public benefits, increased taxes, and increased spending. According to the study, Per Scholas enrollees are 50% less likely than their peers to receive unemployment insurance, nutritional, and income support in the two years following their enrollment at Per Scholas.

Project QUEST

Project QUEST is a workforce intermediary enabling individuals to receive education and training to prepare them for career readiness, job placement, and job retention in living-wage careers within three major industries including Healthcare, Information Technology/Cybersecurity, and Trades/Advanced



Manufacturing. QUEST is a nationally recognized workforce model that has been researched and tested to be effective by the Aspen Institute, Ford Foundation, and was part of a gold standard independent study conducted by the Economic Mobility Corporation. QUEST delivers a participant-centric approach to assist in meeting their career goals.

Propel America

Propel America is a national nonprofit which exists to address the critical need to provide young adults with more supported, quick, and affordable ways to access a career in healthcare AND to provide employers with a more diverse, trained talent pipeline. Propel America partners with employers to assess talent needs, create relevant training programs, and hire for their in-demand roles. Propel recruits, guides, and supports young adults (18-24 years old), particularly those from low-income backgrounds, through a blended career accelerator fellowship to ensure they have the durable and technical skills needed to be successful in their role and a plan for ongoing education and career advancement. To best support young adults, Propel partners with training and higher education organizations to offer in-demand credentials that allow them to earn college credits as they train and work. To learn more about Propel America, please visit <https://www.propelamerica.org>.

Social Finance, Inc.

Social Finance is a national impact finance and advisory nonprofit. We work with the public, private, and social sectors to create partnerships and investments that measurably improve lives. Since our founding in 2011, we have mobilized \$350 million in new investments designed to help people and communities realize improved outcomes in education, economic mobility, health, and housing. In addition to managing the investment program funded by the Google Career Certificates Fund, our economic mobility portfolio includes the UP Fund, place-based Pay It Forward Funds, and the Dreamers Graduate Loan Fund. Learn more at socialfinance.org.

Third Sector Capital Partners

Third Sector Capital Partners is a national nonprofit technical assistance organization that advises our government agencies on effective ways to reshape their policies, systems, and services toward better outcomes for all people no matter their race, background, or circumstance. We work alongside communities to help build a future that includes stable employment and housing, increased income, stronger families, and physical and mental health. When our work is complete, agencies entrusted to use public funds have the systems, tools, and data to do more and do better for their communities. Since 2011, we have worked with more than 50 communities and transitioned over \$1.2 billion in public funding to social programs that measurably improve lives. Our team of 50 employees works nationwide and is united by our mission to transform public systems to advance improved and equitable outcomes.

Year Up

Year Up is a national 501(c)3 workforce development organization committed to ensuring equitable access to economic opportunity, education, and justice for all young adults—no matter their background, income, or zip code. Year Up utilizes a high-expectations, high support model where students learn in-demand technical and professional skills and apply them during a corporate internship. Year Up has served more than 40,000 young adults across 35 locations (including community college campuses) since its founding in 2000 and has been voted one of the "Best Non-Profits to Work For" by The NonProfit Times. The organization continuously delivers strong outcomes for the young adults served and works with a committed network of corporate employers to support work-based experiences and entry-level middle-school career opportunities. To learn more, visit <http://www.yearup.org>.