



May 15, 2025

RE: Reductions to Higher Education Programs in Reconciliation Bill and President's Budget

Dear California Congressional Delegation:

On behalf of the California Community Colleges and the 2.1 million students we serve in the nation's largest system of higher education and workforce training, we write to express our concerns regarding the reductions in student financial aid eligibility proposed in the budget reconciliation measure currently being considered by the House and Senate, as well as in the President's recently released "skinny budget." Together, these proposals would reduce federal support for California's community college students by **well over \$300 million annually**—an impact that would prevent many students from completing their programs, ultimately keeping them from entering the workforce with the skills and training California's employers need.

Reconciliation Bill, H.Con.Res.14

The education portion of the reconciliation bill, [the Student Success and Taxpayer Savings Plan](#), proposes to increase the minimum number of units students must take in order to receive a federal Pell Grant. The Pell Grant, which provides up to **\$7,395 per year** for low-income students to access and afford higher education, is currently available to students taking at least three (3) units per semester (or quarter equivalent). Students are eligible for the maximum award if they enroll in at least twelve (12) units per semester, or 24 units per year.

Under the proposed changes, students would need to take at least **30 units per year** to receive the full award, and **at least 15 units per year** (half-time) to be able to receive a Pell Grant. These



changes would cut off hundreds of thousands of California community college students from critical financial support they rely on to attend college, complete a degree or certificate program, and enter the workforce on a high-wage career pathway. Like many students across the nation, California community college students are part time because they are concurrently working or balancing multiple responsibilities. Cutting their eligibility to the Pell Grant for failing to enroll in school full time penalizes them for navigating the very challenges they are working so hard to overcome.

According to our public DataMart research website¹, over 421,000 unduplicated students received a Pell Grant in the 2023-24 academic year; **more than one-third of these students**, who are disproportionately low-income, would see their aid reduced by an average of **\$1,800 per student (over \$250 million in total)** under the reconciliation proposal. Studies² have shown that, for low-income students in particular, receiving financial aid increases their likelihood of on-time graduation and program completion. Reducing the aid available to our lowest-income students would lead to fewer completions and fewer skilled workers entering the workforce.

We urge you to oppose this proposal—and any similar proposals that would reduce financial aid for low-income community college students. Such proposals will impact not just your constituents, but the long-term well-being of the communities you represent. California’s employers and industry leaders depend on our community colleges and the **150,000+ students** we graduate annually with degrees, certificates, and workforce-ready skills. Any limits on our students’ ability to progress through their programs will ultimately restrict California’s economic growth and the industries’ ability to hire qualified, skilled workers.

President’s Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2026 (FY2026)

In addition to the reconciliation bill, President Trump’s proposed [Budget for Fiscal Year 2026](#) “skinny budget” includes several proposals that would significantly impact California’s ability to educate the next generation of workers. These proposals warrant your attention due to their broad implications for our students and communities.

The President’s Budget proposes to **eliminate all funding for the federal TRIO programs**, which provide personalized outreach and support to help low-income and underrepresented students succeed in higher education. In 2023, these programs provided more than **\$58 million** to dozens of community colleges throughout California—rural and urban, red and blue, inland and coastal.

¹ https://datamart.cccco.edu/Services/FinAid_Summary.aspx

² <https://www.aera.net/Newsroom/Recent-AERA-Research/Toward-the-Education-Nation-Revisiting-the-Impact-of-Financial-Aid-College-Experience-and-Institutional-Context-on-Baccalaureate-Degree-Attainment-for-Low-Income-Students>



Additionally, the budget includes **major reductions to the operations of the U.S. Department of Education**, which supports millions of low-income students in applying for aid, investigates complaints of discrimination and harassment, and works to expand access for students with disabilities and adult learners. The budget also eliminates the **Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant program funding** and proposes significant cuts to the **Federal Work Study** program, both of which serve as critical lifelines for our most vulnerable students.

Taken together, the reconciliation bill and the President's budget proposal would significantly reduce access to higher education and workforce training for **hundreds of thousands of California community college students**. As a result, fewer students would be able to attend, persist, and complete their programs—shrinking the pipeline of skilled, educated workers that fuel our economy and strengthen our communities.

We urge you to consider these implications carefully as you evaluate the reconciliation measure and the President's Budget. Thank you for your continued service to the people of California. If you have any questions about these proposals or their impact on the California Community Colleges, please contact **David O'Brien, Vice Chancellor of External Relations**, at **dobrien@cccco.edu**.

Sincerely,

David O'Brien
Vice Chancellor of External Relations
California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office

Andrew Martinez
Senior Director of Government Relations
Community College League of California



Fresno City College | Reedley College | Clovis Community College
Madera Community College | Madera Community College at Oakhurst

MT. SAN JACINTO COLLEGE



College and Districts listed:

Allan Hancock Joint CCD, American River College, Antelope Valley CCD, Barstow CCD, Berkeley City College, Butte-Glenn CCD, Cabrillo CCD, Calbright College, Cerritos CCD, Chabot College, Chabot-Las Positas CCD, Chaffey CCD, Citrus CCD, Clovis Community College, Coast CCD, Coastline Community College, College of Alameda, Columbia College, Compton CCD, Contra Costa CCD, Contra Costa College, Copper Mountain CCD, Cosumnes River College, Crafton Hills College, Cuyamaca College, Cypress College, De Anza College, Diablo Valley College, El Camino CCD, Evergreen Valley College, Feather River CCD, Folsom Lake College, Foothill College, Foothill-DeAnza CCD, Fresno City College, Fullerton College, Gavilan CCD, Glendale CCD, Golden West College, Grossmont College, Grossmont-Cuyamaca CCD, Irvine Valley College, Laney College, Lassen CCD, Los Medanos College, Los Rios CCD, Madera Community College, Marin CCD, Mendocino-Lake CCD, Merritt College, MiraCosta CCD, Modesto Junior College, Monterey Peninsula CCD, Moorpark College, Moreno Valley College, Mt. San Antonio CCD, Mt. San Jacinto CCD, Norco College, North Orange Continuing Education, North Orange County CCD, Ohlone CCD, Orange Coast College, Oxnard College, Palo Verde CCD, Peralta CCD, Rancho Santiago CCD, Redwoods CCD, Reedley College, Riverside CCD, Riverside City College, Sacramento City College, Saddleback College, San Bernardino CCD, San Bernardino Valley College, San Diego CCD, San Diego Miramar College, San Jose City College, San Jose-Evergreen CCD, San Luis Obispo County CCD (Cuesta College), Santa Ana College, Santa Clarita CCD (College of the Canyons), Santa Monica CCD, Santiago Canyon College, Sequoias CCD, Sierra Joint CCD, Siskiyou Joint CCD, Solano CCD, South Orange County CCD, Southwestern CCD, State Center CCD, Taft College, Ventura CCD, Ventura College, Victor Valley CCD, West Hills CCD, West Hills College Coalinga, Woodland Community College, Yosemite CCD, Yuba CCD, Yuba College
and
Community College League of California, California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office