



August 26, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairwoman
HELP Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Bobby Scott
Chairman
Committee on Education & Labor
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
HELP Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Ranking Member
Committee on Education & Labor
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Murray, Chairman Scott, Ranking Member Burr & Ranking Member Foxx,

On behalf of the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE), the nation's largest not-for-profit association committed to the advancement of education that prepares youth and adults for career success, and Advance CTE, the nation's longest-standing not-for-profit that represents State Directors and leaders responsible for secondary, postsecondary and adult career and technical education (CTE) across all 50 states and U.S. territories, we are writing to ensure that area CTE centers (ATCs) are not inadvertently overlooked as eligible institutions in any free college proposal offered in the budget reconciliation package, or any other postsecondary programs included in that package designed to support students as they obtain postsecondary credentials.

As you know, there are nearly 1,200 of these public institutions across the country, with a subset of them in at least 27 states that offer Title IV eligible programs that serve postsecondary students as a key component of the state's postsecondary system (see www.areatechnicalcenters.org for more information). In many states, ATCs play a very similar role to the community college system, but with a more intensive focus on high-skill, high-wage and in-demand technical career preparation.

ATCs contribute to postsecondary attainment goals while remaining nimble and responsive to economic demands. We wholeheartedly agree with the Administration's determination that learners deserve additional support to build their skills, increase their earnings, remain competitive and share in the benefits of the evolving economy – and ATCs are in a unique position to effectively provide such supports. But unfortunately, because ATCs are generally not degree granting, all too frequently they are left out of federal legislation, thus making them ineligible for vital federal resources. Often this occurs unintentionally, given the multiple definitions of institutions of higher education within federal statute.

ATCs cannot continue to be overlooked in the wider discussions and decisions regarding postsecondary education and workforce development. These under-utilized public institutions can and should be better leveraged to help more learners equitably access and attain postsecondary education and related credentials of value. Doing so will help close skills and opportunity gaps and ensure that more Americans have the skills, competencies and credentials they need for career success and economic prosperity.

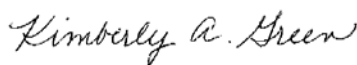
As you work to assemble the budget reconciliation package, we urge you to ensure ATCs are included in free college proposals and other postsecondary supports by specifically referencing definitions in either the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Section 3(3) or the Higher Education Act section 101(b) or 102(c).

If you have any questions or would like to discuss the importance of ATCs, please contact ACTE's Senior Director of Public Policy Alisha Hyslop (ahyslop@acteonline.org) or Advance CTE's Senior Associate for Federal Policy Meredith Hills (mhills@careertech.org).

Sincerely,



LeAnn Wilson
Executive Director
ACTE



Kimberly A. Green
Executive Director
Advance CTE