



October 1, 2021

The Honorable Aaron Michlewitz

Chair, House Ways & Means
State House, Room 243
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Michael Rodrigues

Chair, Senate Ways & Means
State House, Room 212
Boston, MA 02133

Chairs Rodrigues and Michlewitz,

Thank you for the opportunity to share this testimony relative to American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funding and the Massachusetts community colleges' funding proposals. We are excited at the possibility of the impact that this funding could have not only for our schools, but also for the Commonwealth's workforce and employers. We are grateful for your consideration.

As leaders in workforce development, our 15 community colleges help to build a skilled workforce that meets the demands of employers across the Commonwealth. The state's most in-demand fields – healthcare, early education, advanced manufacturing, IT and cybersecurity, among others – are facing an acute shortage of skilled workers. To help address these workforce needs, we are seeking \$15 million per year over two years to deliberately focus on assisting the thousands of unemployed workers ready to re-enter the workforce who may require upskilling. Our proposal accounts for regional demand and creates career pathways and credentials that employers are actively seeking. If granted these funds, we anticipate that our colleges could serve approximately 3,000 learners over the next two years at no cost to students or employers. These funds would get workers into jobs in truly in-demand fields in the Commonwealth.

In addition to the \$30 million for direct workforce training, we request the following:

- \$ 225 million for unfunded deferred maintenance to address much-needed upgrades on our public campuses
- \$100 million for information technology investments
- \$50 million for staff, faculty, students and administrator training to ensure effective use of newly-introduced teaching and learning tools

Collectively, our 15 community colleges educate, train, reskill, and support more than 136,000 students across the Commonwealth each year. Our schools serve the largest population of low-income students and families in the state, and annual tuition and fees is an average of \$6,500 annually. We enroll the largest percentage of students of color in the public higher education system.

Our students do not fall into the traditional profile of a first-time college student. They are working, parenting, and serving as caregivers while they pursue their educations or train for a new career.

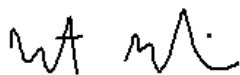
A 2019 study by the Department of Higher ed showed that 42% of community college students in Massachusetts were food insecure, and 50 percent housing insecure. A full 17% of our students reported having been homeless in the year prior – and this was pre-pandemic. I can tell you that these numbers have, without a doubt, risen since March 2020.

Our colleges train a skilled workforce; educate students in desperately needed fields like CNA, nursing, and respiratory therapy; provide a springboard to a higher degree for those who seek further education; and help to close equity gaps, which brings me to our final ask.

According to an [April 2021 study from MassInc](#), Early College programs have the ability to generate meaningful reductions in post-secondary completion gaps by race, ethnicity, and income. While we are grateful to the legislature for the \$2.5 million allocation in the FY21 budget to develop and implement Early College programs, additional funding to allow our colleges to build additional structures around Early College would be pivotal in advancing equity in the Commonwealth.

Thank you for your continued support of our institutions and thank you for considering these requests.

Sincerely,



Nate Mackinnon
Executive Director
Massachusetts Association of Community
Colleges (MACC)



Dr. David Podell
President
MassBay Community College