



April 17, 2020

The Honorable Patty Murray

The Honorable Suzan DelBene

The Honorable Rick Larsen

The Honorable Jaime Herrera Beutler

The Honorable Dan Newhouse

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers

The Honorable Maria Cantwell

The Honorable Derek Kilmer

The Honorable Pramila Jayapal

The Honorable Kim Schrier

The Honorable Adam Smith

The Honorable Denny Heck

Dear Honorable Washington State Congressional Delegates:

Thank you for your continued support of Washington state and the country through measures like the CARES Act and your advocacy as we continue to face the COVID-19 pandemic. This unprecedented time will undoubtedly have a major impact on our economy, and our colleges are incurring high levels of unexpected costs: staff and faculty are taking on additional workload to redesign courses to be taught online, purchase laptops, hotspots and other technology for students and employees, and provide extra support for our most vulnerable students.

Hundreds of thousands of Washingtonians filed for unemployment insurance in the last month as businesses remain closed or under limited operation for the near future. Given the future's economic uncertainty, I, on behalf of Washington's 34 community and technical colleges and the nearly 360,000 students we serve, respectfully ask you include our college system as part of state and national economic recovery efforts.

During turbulent economic times, demand will skyrocket for new skills training and credentials, financial aid, and student support services for people who are out of work. That's why it's essential for community and technical colleges to be included in recovery efforts. Our colleges provide an affordable, high-quality education in areas critical to getting our state's economy back on track. We help people learn the skills they need to get back to work in high-demand fields.

As you work on the next stimulus package, we respectfully submit the following requests for your consideration:

Instructional Support

- Fund non-credit skills training program — like the Jobs Skills Program — for business, industry and organizations to boost our state's economic recovery.

- Support professional development for faculty as they move their classes online, especially for workforce faculty who teach traditionally hands-on courses.
- Invest in additional faculty positions and equipment to reduce the number of people in classrooms and allow for physical distancing.
- Fund additional faculty and staff positions. Community and technical colleges anticipate an increase in enrollment as that is correlated cyclically to the health of the economy.
- Relax or modify credentialing and completion requirements to position students for immediate employment.
- Ensure students with disabilities and non-native English speakers are well served in an online classroom environment.
- Provide incentives as colleges serve historically underrepresented students, including those who are low income, first generation, and students of color.
- Expand funding to Adult Education and Literacy (WIOA Title II) in order to accelerate under-skilled adults' completion of workforce certificates and degrees for in demand industry sectors and occupations through evidence-based practices like Washington's Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training or I-BEST workforce training programs.

Technology and Infrastructure

- Invest in college internet and hardware to support remote learning. This includes additional servers, laptops, hotspots, and VPN.
- Invest in high-speed internet infrastructure, especially in rural areas, to ensure all students have equal access to remote education opportunities.
- Increase funding to upgrade existing technology as colleges move to a more virtual world.
- Provide online tools for teaching, proctoring, and virtual simulation.
- Provide funding for remote workplace needs, such as ergonomic desks and chairs.
- Funds to purchase certified disinfecting and cleaning supplies as well as funds for staff to undertake cleaning.

Student Support

- Fund emergency funds for students who need short-term assistance with expenses like rent, utilities, and groceries.
- Provide funding for food pantries, housing, health care and on-campus social workers to help students navigate those systems.
- Remove work requirements for students receiving SNAP benefits and expanded capacity to serve increased number of students becoming eligible for the program.
- Provide funding and access for childcare so students and employees can continue their studies and work.
- Fund college-dedicated mental health services to support students and employees.
- Extend support and assistance to undocumented students.

Financial Aid

- Modernize processes at the Department of Veterans Affairs to allow students to use their benefits in all ways colleges offer classes.
- Consider loan forgiveness for student struggling to make ends meet.

- Increase financial aid opportunities, including additional funds and staffing to process additional financial aid applications.

Employment

- Invest in businesses, especially small businesses in rural communities, that provide employment opportunities.

Thank you again for your dedication to the people of the State of Washington. We greatly appreciate your support as we continue our mission in service to our students, and we look forward to doing our part to serve them in our economic recovery. Feel free to contact me at jyoshiwara@sbctc.edu if you have questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jan Yoshiwara', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jan Yoshiwara, Executive Director