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WASHINGTON'S 9TH DISTRICT

Community and Technical College Investment Act

Rep. Adam Smith (WA-09)

Background: Today over 6 in 10 U.S. jobs require a postsecondary degree or credential while the cost of attending obtaining these degrees and credentials have soared to record levels¹. Recent studies show that fewer than 40% of community college students earn a certificate or degree within six years of enrollment². The lack of financial resources and broader support systems for students are among the top reported reasons for students being unable to complete their programs³.

Community and technical colleges offer students a viable pathway to good-paying jobs across a wide spectrum of career choices and opportunities. However, barriers to attending and completing programs⁴ at community and technical colleges are an urgent problem for millions of Americans seeking a pathway into the middle-class and competing in a job market that demands a skilled and educated workforce.

The Community and Technical College Investment Act will enable states to offer tuition-free community and technical college and expanded wraparound support services. The bill:

- Creates a new grant program within the Department of Education to provide states funding to implement tuition-free community and technical schools, focused on serving the highest-need students.
- Provides funding to states to provide subgrants to establish and expand wraparound support services that support disadvantaged students in need of assistance with housing, food, transportation, or other non-tuition related costs.
- Establishes an emergency subgrant fund program that can provide students attending public higher education institutions with emergency cash to help cover the loss of employment, childcare, housing, or other challenges that threaten to disrupt the ability of the student to complete their program.
- Require states to evaluate gaps and opportunities in the State workforce, higher-education, childcare, and human services systems and better maximize Federal and State resources to increase economic mobility and postsecondary credential attainment.

Community and technical colleges have the potential to bring more individuals and families into the middle-class and provide for a better quality of life. We need to reorient the investments and incentives in higher education to help more students choose these pathways. This legislation invests in the community and technical college system, enables states to offer free tuition at these schools, and expands vitally important wraparound support services to help students enroll and complete their programs.

¹ <http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/tomorrows-college/dropouts/value-of-college-degree.html>

² <https://www.brookings.edu/research/community-college-completion-rates-structural-and-motivational-barriers/>

³ <https://www.prb.org/resources/the-barriers-to-a-college-degree/>

⁴ <https://1gyhoq479ufd3yna29x7ubjn-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/collegepayoff-completed.pdf>