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July 17, 2009

The Honorable George Miller, Chairman  
Committee on Education and Labor  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Miller:

Earlier this week, the Association for Career and Technical Education applauded President Obama's new American Graduation Initiative. The Obama plan recognizes the important role that community and technical colleges play in educating and training both traditional and nontraditional students for the high-demand jobs needed to keep the United States economically competitive. We also praise your introduction of the Student Aid and Financial Responsibility Act and the inclusion of its Community College Initiative, as well as other provisions to help students and institutions providing critical postsecondary education and job training to build a pipeline of skilled workers for the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy.

The important role of community and technical colleges, as well as area career and technical education centers that serve adults, is too often overlooked in policy discussions related to improving postsecondary education. These institutions are contributing greatly to the number of postsecondary credentials that students earn, and this legislation goes a long way toward addressing the tremendous value these schools provide to help students earn credentials with proven market value and create seamless education pathways.

As representatives of the nation's career and technical education system (CTE), we are especially pleased to see area career and technical education schools included in the definition of eligible entities for the community college challenge grants. In the education systems of some states, these institutions play a critical role in serving hundreds of thousands of adults and helping them to earn industry-recognized credentials and certificates that can then articulate to associate and bachelor's degree programs.

We are also extremely pleased with the language throughout this initiative that places value on certificates and industry-recognized credentials. The Council of Economic Adviser's "Preparing the Workers of Today for the Jobs of Tomorrow" report released

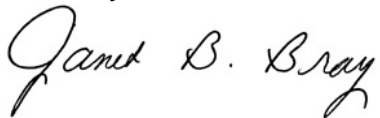
on July 13, 2009, includes references to the high-need jobs requiring these credentials, along with associate degrees, in the fastest-growing category over the next seven years.

Other issues addressed by the legislation, such as transfer of credits, articulation agreements, improved data systems, job skill training, apprenticeships, dual enrollment programs, and preparing students for high-wage occupations in high-demand industries, are critical to the development of a seamless education and workforce development system that will produce the workforce needed to keep the United States economically viable and competitive in the 21st century.

We also support funding contained in the bill to improve educational facilities at the secondary and postsecondary level. Modern, safe and technologically up-to-date facilities are important to student achievement, and to ensuring students are prepared for today's high-tech workplace. This is especially critical in CTE facilities, and we hope that provisions can be included in the bill to ensure area career and technical education schools are able to access these funds.

As the Education and Labor Committee considers this important legislation, we urge that it be approved and that its strong focus on strengthening community and technical colleges and area career and technical centers be maintained. If we can provide any assistance as the process moves forward, please contact ACTE Senior Director of Public Policy Steve DeWitt at 703-683-3111 or [sdewitt@acteonline.org](mailto:sdewitt@acteonline.org). Thank you for your work and leadership on this critical issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Janet B. Bray".

Janet B. Bray, CAE  
ACTE Executive Director