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July 23, 2014

The Honorable John Kline
Chairman
Committee on Education and the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
2175 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable George Miller
Senior Democrat
Committee on Education and the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
2101 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Kline and Senior Democrat Miller:

On behalf of Rebuilding America's Middle Class (RAMC), a coalition of state and individual community college systems from across the nation representing over 120 colleges and 1.5 million students, I am writing in support of the bipartisan higher education bills being considered by the House this week.

RAMC strongly supports providing community colleges with the tools to develop and enhance competency-based education, and HR. 3136, "The Advancing Competency-Based Education Demonstration Projects Act," will allow our institutions to apply for waivers to expand our efforts to serve our students through these innovative methods. RAMC believes that these programs can benefit students by improving the career-readiness of graduates and reducing the time to degree – thereby making college more affordable. However, current law and regulations do not provide the flexibility necessary for most institutions of higher education to truly innovate and develop new programs to meet the needs of 21st century, non-traditional students. This bill changes that situation, and we look forward to its passage so we can expand our efforts to improve competency-based education programs on our campuses.

We also support H.R. 4983, "The Strengthening Transparency in Higher Education Act," to provide increased data transparency for college students and their families. RAMC members believe that accurate information should be available to students, parents and the general public about topics like the true



cost of attendance, student learning, transfer of credit policies and completion rates.

RAMC is committed to continuing to work with Congress and the Administration to improve the quality and accuracy of federal data, particularly regarding community colleges. We are particularly interested in continuing conversations around the appropriate time period to report on completion. At many community colleges, part-time students are the norm rather than the exception. These students often take four, five or six years to complete an associate's degree, rather than the standard two-year period for full time students. We would urge the Committee as it moves forward with Higher Education Act reauthorization to recognize this reality and include reporting on completion over a six-year period.

H.R. 4984, "The Empowering Students through Enhanced Financial Counseling Act," will provide improved counseling for students who receive Pell Grants and student loans in order to manage and budget their higher education expenses. This bill contains new provisions that promote innovative online financial counseling tools for students, and we are pleased to support its passage.

RAMC is encouraged that Republicans and Democrats worked together to craft these bills, and we hope that it is a sign of what is to come when Congress chooses to reauthorize the Higher Education Act in the near future. We look forward to working with you on these bills and other issues that impact community colleges.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Joe D. May'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'J' and 'M'.

Joe May
Board Chair, Rebuilding America's Middle Class (RAMC)
Chancellor, Dallas County Community College District