

Community College to Career Fund Act

What is the “Skills Gap” and why does it matter?

Across the country, employers from every sector are struggling to find qualified applicants to fill available jobs. The shortage of skilled workers in relation to open jobs – known as the “skills gap” – harms the competitiveness of local businesses and hinders our nation’s economic growth. However, despite widespread consensus on the need to bridge the skills gap, there has not been sustained national action to address this growing economic challenge.

America’s community colleges are ready to serve as a bridge between the American workforce and employers that need workers with specific training and skills. Yet to date, direct Federal investments have largely neglected these local educational institutions in favor of traditional four-year universities.

The Community College to Career Fund Act addresses this problem:

Congresswoman Duckworth’s legislation establishes a fund that will build upon existing public-private partnerships to invest in, strengthen and promote relationships between community colleges and local employers that develop job-training programs and curriculums.

Programs will have to compete for funds that support efforts to train millions of Americans for middle-skill jobs in high-demand industries, such as healthcare, advanced manufacturing, clean energy and information technology. These partnerships are modeled on proven programs that have already achieved real world results.

The Community College to Career Fund Act:

- Creates a 3-year competitive grant program administered by the Department of Labor;
- Grants fund public-private partnership between employers or industry groups and two-year educational programs at community colleges, tribal non-profit colleges and technical four-year educational institutions, to implement job training-related programs, such as registered apprenticeships, on-the-job training opportunities and paid internships for low-income students; and
- Promotes partnerships that provide direct hiring opportunities for individuals with barriers to employment, Veterans and their families.

Senator Al Franken (D-MN), introduced the Senate companion measure.