



March 20, 2018

The Honorable Holly Mitchell, Chair

Senate Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review
State Capitol, Room 5080
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Anthony Portantino, Chair

Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Subcommittee #1
State Capitol, Room 3086
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Support for Governor Brown's Proposed Online Community College

Dear Senators Mitchell and Portantino,

California Forward **strongly supports Governor Brown's proposal to create a fully online statewide community college** designed to increase access for 2.5 million under-skilled Californians who are not being served by existing college programs. Not only must these Californians develop additional skills to move above minimum wage jobs but also California employers cannot grow and remain competitive without more skilled workers. **We urge you to enact this historic proposal.**

CA Fwd and our partners in the CA Economic Summit have prioritized workforce development as a key lever for reducing poverty and fortifying economic vitality. Over several years, we have collectively supported additional resources and reforms throughout the community college system and we have worked closely with individual community colleges and their leaders and faculty to align programs and curriculum with in-demand jobs with the potential to pay living wages.

The Governor's proposal has the potential to reach those Californians who for a number of documented reasons are unlikely to succeed through on-campus, semester-based instruction. In addition to online instruction, the Governor's proposal is designed to replicate and advance other elements – including competency-based learning, multiple start times, and personalized support – that are proven to work with untraditional students.

Of the 2.5 million working-age Californians in need of “up-skilling”, 49 percent are Latino, 31 percent white, 9 percent Asian and 7 percent African American. Many of them are the primary wage earner for their household. They often work full-time jobs and care for children and aging parents. They can't fight traffic at rush hour for several months to get to a classroom to complete a single class.

The short-term certificates and credential programs also are pathways for workers to frequently add to their skills so they can advance a career ladder and adapt to new technologies.

The 115th community college also will create more opportunities to partner with employers to make sure students are learning the right skills without wasting valuable time on unnecessary classes. These partnerships will increase the chances of employment upon completion, position programs to more quickly adapt to technology and other changes in the workplace, and even help employers to integrate learning into work schedules.

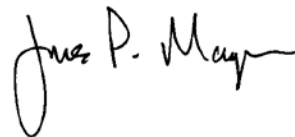
CA Fwd and our partners in the Summit have been engaging community leaders on this proposal and on the “future of work” more generally. These leaders consistently validate the need to create new ways for people to access education, and affirm that student support will be essential to student success. We believe some of the specific concerns are best addressed in the detailed design, rollout and continuous improvement of the college.

As with the Strong Workforce Program created by the Legislature in 2016, CA Fwd and our partners are prepared to help with the implementation of the online college so that the Legislature’s intent for more access, more completion and more employment is achieved.

Additional perspectives from California leaders can be found on the proposal’s [website](#). For more information on the CA Economic Summit’s One Million More Skilled Workers initiative – and related efforts to reduce California’s highest in the nation poverty rate – we encourage you to visit the [Summit online](#) and contact us to participate more fully in this exciting project.

Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James P. Mayer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "J".

James P. Mayer
President & CEO