

Make Pell Work: Pass the JOBS Act



Problem: Today, approximately 80 percent of all jobs require some form of postsecondary education or training—including the more than 50 percent of jobs that are “middle-skill” requiring more than a high school diploma but not a four-year degree.

Despite this demand for skills, most federal financial aid made available to postsecondary students through the Higher Education Act (HEA) is reserved for programs that are at least 600 clock hours of instruction over a minimum of fifteen weeks. This policy is at odds with the realities of today’s postsecondary education landscape, where many students, including workers looking to increase their skills, seek to enroll in sub-degree programs—such as those related to pipefitting, manufacturing, and the electrical trades—that can lead to industry-recognized credentials. In fact, community college leaders have pointed out that the lack of federal financial aid for quality noncredit and short-term programs is preventing them from fully meeting the needs of students and employers.

Solution: To address this inequity and help students and employers find success in today’s economy, Senators Kaine (D-VA) and Portman (R-OH), Co-chairs of the Senate Career and Technical Education Caucus introduced the Jumpstarting our Businesses by Supporting Students (JOBS) Act. This bipartisan bill would modernize HEA by:

- ◆ Expanding Pell grant eligibility to students enrolled in quality short-term education and training programs offered by public institutions of higher education that:
 - Are at least 150 clock hours over eight weeks of instruction;
 - Provide training aligned with the needs of employers in a state or local area;
 - Are offered by an eligible training provider as defined by Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA);
 - Award program completers with an industry-valued credential;
 - Satisfy any applicable prerequisites for professional licensure or certification;
 - Have been evaluated by an accrediting agency for quality and student outcomes; and
 - Connect to a career pathway when applicable.

The JOBS Act is a win for students and employers

- ◆ On average, certificate holders earn 30 percent more than individuals with a high school diploma alone.
- ◆ The wage premium for short-term programs in certain fields is often comparable to associate’s degrees and even bachelor’s degrees.
- ◆ However, more than two-thirds of organizations hiring full-time staff indicate they are struggling to successfully recruit qualified candidates due to lack of technical skills and a deficiency of relevant credentials or certifications among job applicants.

