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Senator Al Franken
United States Senate
309 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Franken:

On behalf of Opportunity Nation, I am writing in support of The Community College to Career Fund Act that will expand innovation and partnerships between community colleges and businesses to train two million Americans for jobs in high-demand industries.

Opportunity Nation is a collaboration of more than 250 national non-profits, employers, educational institutions, faith-based and community organizations that together support, engage and reach more than 100 million Americans. Our coalition is committed to the notion that an individual's zip code at birth should not determine his or her destiny. We believe that targeted actions to provide greater opportunity for young Americans will pay off in long-term economic success for families, communities and the Nation.

In order to expand opportunity for the 6.7 million young Americans who are currently out of school or out of work, we must change the way we do business. Employers are increasingly seeking workers with a specific set of skills to meet the demands of a changing economy. The Community College to Career Fund Act meets the changing workforce needs by encouraging partnerships between community colleges and business. These partnerships would give more students on-the-job training, paid apprenticeships and internships and a rigorous curriculum at community colleges and technical schools and, at the same time, meet regional and state workforce needs. We also support the inclusion of a pay-for-performance grant program as part of the legislation to support effective programs and activities with demonstrated results.

We know that successful partnerships where businesses and community colleges collaborate to train the workers they need are currently happening in communities around the country. Recognizing the need for high-skilled employees for its facilities in Iowa, the precision tooling and micromolding company Accumold partnered with the Des Moines Area Community College system to create the Accumold Scholars Program. This scholarship covers tuition costs and offers students the opportunity to work part-time through Accumold's earn and learn program. Graduates of the program qualify for a position at Accumold, a leading employer in Iowa.

Thank you for your leadership in putting young adults on a path towards a meaningful career and look forward to continuing to work with you on this important issues. If you have any questions, or if I can provide any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Mark Edwards
Executive Director