

Testimony to Committee on Education and Labor at Subcommittee on Higher Education

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Mr. Chairman, it's a genuine pleasure to be here today. I want to thank you and the distinguished members of the subcommittee for the leadership each of you has provided the education community. It demonstrates your understanding of the complex issues confronting America and its role in a free world. I especially want to thank you for the recent work you've completed to increase PELL grants which is particularly important to Californians and for correcting the student loan program making it less expensive for students to borrow (though we all wish students would not be forced to borrow funds to further their educations).

I am the Chancellor of the Los Angeles Community College District. The district has nine colleges throughout the Los Angeles area and is largest community college district in the nation. We educate over 187,000 students each year. Many of our students come from disadvantaged backgrounds and are what most consider the "underserved" population. Eighty percent of our students are minorities and forty percent live below the poverty line. A third of our students attend our colleges to obtain job skills through

career technical/vocational training and another third transfer on to colleges and universities to obtain a bachelors degree.

California Community Colleges are a major pipeline to California's public four-year colleges. Two-thirds of California State University graduates and one-third of University of California graduates start at a community college.

I am here today representing the Los Angeles Community College District; however, I have a statewide perspective having just served as Chancellor for the 109-campus California Community College System. There are many outstanding programs and innovative efforts underway throughout the state to improve and expand the quality of science, technology, engineering and math education as part of work force development but there is much more to do.

I applaud the congressional efforts to increase support for these disciplines in legislation you refer to as STEM. Each of us is aware that the economy is changing and for California to retain its economic competitiveness, job creation requires a work force equipped with skills in science, the technologies, engineering concepts, and a solid foundation in mathematics.

Sadly, insufficient numbers of public school teachers are credentialed in these disciplines and the pipeline to replace a cadre of seasoned and about to retire teachers is insufficient to meet the challenges of a prepared work force. California Community Colleges represent one of the largest potential recruitment pools for future math and science teachers in the state. Nearly half of all CSU teacher candidates in math and science begin at community colleges.

California Community Colleges are attempting to address the STEM teaching crisis by partnering with the UC's and Cal State's with a variety of innovative programs to develop highly qualified teachers. A few notable programs include the Teacher Preparation Pipeline Project, the CSU Mathematics and Science Teacher Initiative (MSTI), and MESA – Mathematics Engineering Science Achievement.

Another issue we face in the Los Angeles Community College District is that approximately eighty-five percent of incoming students require some form of remediation in math. This is not an indictment on public schools. Rather, it's a picture of the challenge ahead. The sooner intervention strategies can be implemented, in the public schools and in partnership with the community colleges, the more likely the pipeline of qualified candidates for college-level math, science, and the related disciplines will increase.

Our campuses reach out to K-12 schools. Specifically, I shall speak to the Jaime Escalante program at East Los Angeles College that uses highly effective, innovative teaching styles to motivate inner-city youth and develop their math aptitudes. Most of you may be familiar with the portrayal of Mr. Escalante in the motion picture titled *Stand and Deliver*. Escalante students' chances for success in college are greatly improved by completing the program as they are better prepared for the challenges ahead of them in math, science, engineering, and technology (STEM).

As I mentioned, we spend considerable resources to remediate students in math and have had great successes. I am pleased to inform you that the Math club at Los Angeles City College ranked number one in national competition this year with East LA College right behind. There are countless other examples of successes but time limits what I can showcase today.

We ask that you support and fund programs aimed to strengthen the likelihood of student success in education. This can come in the form of Title V grants aimed at streamlined basic skills, Extended Opportunity Program and Services (EOP&S) type programs specifically aimed at STEM potentials, and scholarship or loan forgiveness programs for STEM participants.

The STEM program is designed to create partnerships of excellence and I urge you to not only fund the program, but include in legislative language, a provision that community colleges must be included in program partnerships for funding consideration as we play an integral training role in these fields.

Nowhere are the needs more pressing than in the broad array of health care services, the entertainment industry where technology is advancing at breakneck speed, and in the need to replace retiring classroom teachers. Academies which focus on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics can provide the model from which work force needs can begin to be addressed. We cannot deny the nation's security and international competitiveness are predicated on the quality and sufficient numbers of graduates in these disciplines. Again, I encourage you to further support STEM educational projects and other related funding opportunities.

As you move forward with this legislation, I am confident that you are mindful of California's and Los Angeles' changing economy and work force needs. Whether it's advanced manufacturing, the digital world, the music and movie industry, teaching, financial services, energy and its related challenges to become independent, hospitality,

or bio-technology, each field requires individuals who can enter the work force prepared to move the industry forward internationally.

On behalf of the Los Angeles City College District, I look forward to working with you and your colleagues to shape meaningful legislation: legislation no less fundamental to America's future than the National Defense program which prepared our last generation of engineers who, as we know, created a world class space program and benefited a variety of U.S. industries.

Thanks you for this opportunity. I welcome any questions you might have.