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May 10, 2010

The Honorable George Miller
Chairman, House Education and Labor
2181 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Miller

On behalf of Imperial Valley College in Imperial, Ca., I write in support of H.R. 4812, the "Local Jobs for America Act." We understand that if enacted the bill is projected to put 1 million people to work by allocating funds directly to local communities to stimulate job creation in the public and private sector. This would include \$23 billion to support education, firefighting and law enforcement jobs.

The education component of this legislation is very personal to us. Imperial Valley College serves a region that has been called the "Capital of the Great Recession," with an unemployment rate that in 2009 was consistently the highest in the United States. In terms of demographics, the Imperial Valley can be characterized by low educational achievement with 40 percent of adults 25 and older lacking a high school diploma or GED, while only approximately 17 percent of the same group has achieved an Associate's degree or beyond.

Without substantial investment, our college will be forced to keep the door shut and exclude hundreds of our residents from having educational opportunity. While our problem may be magnified because of our local economic situation, other community colleges in our state face similar decisions. Without intervention, there will be further dramatic reductions in the very courses offerings and student services necessary to maintain educational opportunities for millions of Californians and the nation.

All community colleges in our state face a confluence of unprecedented higher education enrollment demand amidst the continuation of California's fiscal and unemployment crisis. Over the last 18 months, statewide funding for community colleges alone has been reduced more than \$850 million. These cuts, the largest seen by California's community colleges, come at a time of record enrollment demand.

Our colleges took an 8% budget reduction when student enrollment is climbing by a similar amount. We have been forced to make dramatic and heart wrenching reductions in course schedules, student services, counseling, and staff. Statewide, these reductions in courses shut the doors on approximately 260,000 students—1,000 of them are from our college alone.

Community colleges and schools were forced to lay-off over 16,000 teachers and 10,000 classified employees over the last two years.

Although the funds from the SFSF in ARRA helped to alleviate even more layoffs and reductions, without additional assistance, our colleges and schools will be faced with more course reductions, further erosion of student services, increased higher education student fees, and staff lay-offs. These budget cuts will come while our enrollment demand increases from high school graduates, returning veterans, the newly


unemployed seeking retraining and career placement, and students redirected from enrollment-limited four-year universities.

By providing federal support for education, we can keep California's educators employed and keep our classes open and services maintained. This is the economically smart thing to do as we recover from the great recession.

Studies have shown that the annual earning potential of a person holding an Associate's degree is \$8,156 higher than that of a high school (GED) graduate. This amount expands to \$23,291 per year for those with baccalaureate degrees over those with high school diplomas.

Greater strategic investments in education will help to reinvest in our future, prevent job loss, and ensure that education remains available for millions.

Sincerely,



Ed Gould, Ed.D.
Superintendent/President