



TENNESSEE BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE

March 11, 2021

The Honorable Bill Lee
Governor of Tennessee
State Capitol, 1st Floor
600 Dr. Martin L. King, Jr. Blvd.
Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Governor Lee:

We write on behalf of the Tennessee Business Roundtable in support of the proposal by Rep. Cepicky and Sen. Hensley (HB6/SB229) to create a four-year completion grant pilot program to assist Tennessee Promise scholarship students in overcoming short-term financial barriers to post-secondary credential completion. We ask that you sign this legislation if passed, and to request that you include funding for this pilot program in your supplemental appropriations bill.

Especially now, as they continue to navigate the incredible and continuing challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic to their lives and post-secondary educations, we hope you'll agree that actively supporting the success of Tennessee's next generation of workers and consumers is more important than ever. We believe that the pilot program proposed by Rep. Cepicky and Sen. Hensley has the potential to prevent perhaps thousands of our Tennessee Promise students from failing to persist to completion of post-secondary credentials when "life gets in the way".

To help achieve our state's critical Drive to 55 objective, we believe Tennessee can and should invest in this pilot intervention to provide low-dollar, yet timely financial support to our Promise students when they experience unexpected short-term financial difficulties. These barriers often cause students to suspend or end their completion efforts at our community colleges and TCATs. Providing completion grants is a research-based strategy for improving persistence and completion, which help Tennesseans pursue high-skill, high-wage careers that create new opportunities for our state's families and economy.

We ask you to support this investment in college completion, and to include funding for it – \$250,000 per year for four years – among your supplemental budget priorities for higher education this year. We appreciate your consideration of our views and our request and look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Matt Kisber
Roundtable 2020-2021 Chair

David Pickler
Education Council Chair

Patrick J. Sheehy
President

Enclosures (2): Text of HB6/SB229; Fiscal Note for HB6/SB229

CC: Blake Harris, Chief of Staff
Brent Easley, Legislative Director
Representative Scott Cepicky
Senator Joey Hensley