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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 10, 2018

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## **PA Community College advocates rally at State Capitol for funding increase in state budget**

HARRISBURG – Supporters of Pennsylvania’s 14 community colleges rallied at the Capitol on Tuesday for a \$10.6 million increase in funding to the college’s operating appropriation in the FY 2018-19 state budget.

The colleges, the commonwealth’s largest and most affordable provider of public postsecondary education, have not received an increase in funding to their operating appropriation in the past two state budgets, while other education entities in the state have received funding increases.

Additional funding “will support the colleges’ vital role in providing high-quality education and workforce training,” said Dr. Stephanie Shanblatt, president of Bucks County Community College and chair of the Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges.

The colleges also recommend \$15 million of the administration’s \$50 million PAsmart proposal be directed to support and expand career pathways at PA community colleges. “The money will allow the colleges to expand existing, and develop new, career pathways for students, including associate degrees, diploma and certificate programs, and dual-enrollment opportunities for high school students,” Dr. Shanblatt said.

Several elected officials, including state Rep. Jim Marshall, state Rep. and Democratic Education Committee Chairman James Roebuck Jr., state Rep. Joanna McClinton, and state Rep. Christopher Rabb spoke out during the rally in favor of funding community colleges. Student representatives from the colleges filled the steps of the main Capitol Rotunda.

“Investing in higher education, especially community colleges, is one of the best investments a state can make,” Chairman Roebuck said.

Added Rep. McClinton, an alumnus of the Community College of Philadelphia: “It’s not just necessary, it’s our duty,” to invest community colleges.

Students and college officials spent a portion of the morning meeting with legislators and legislative staff to describe the benefits community colleges provide to the commonwealth and ask for a much-needed funding increase.

On Tuesday afternoon, state Rep. and Democratic Appropriations Committee Chairman Joe Markosek tweeted: “I am a supporter (and) visited with some passionate students who shared with me how community colleges are making a difference in their lives.”

*The Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges is a voluntary membership association for Pennsylvania’s community colleges. Its members include the college presidents, members of the colleges’ boards of trustees, and key college administrators. The Commission represents the interests of and advocates for the collective needs of the community colleges to federal and state policymakers. For more information, please visit [www.pacommunitycolleges.org](http://www.pacommunitycolleges.org).*