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SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE
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February 24, 2012

The Honorable Arne Duncan
Secretary of Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20202

The Honorable Hilda Solis
Secretary of Labor
U.S. Department of Labor
200 Constitution Ave, NW, Room S-2018
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Secretary Duncan and Secretary Solis,

Recently, President Obama laid out a working Blueprint for a Community College to Career Fund that would prepare two million workers for direct job placement by helping them acquire specific technical skills to succeed in various industries. This plan would forge new partnerships with community colleges across the nation, invest in our economy, and ultimately provide jobs for hard-working Americans. We write to request that the Administration ensure the full and fair inclusion of the U.S. territories within the proposed Community College to Career Fund.

As you know, the territories are subject to funding caps or statutory set-asides under many federally-funded education programs. This places students in Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, and the Northern Marianas Islands at a distinct disadvantage relative to their counterparts in the states. Indeed, significant achievement gaps have been shown to exist between students in the territories and students in the 50 states. Further, the unemployment rate in each of the U.S. territories has historically been higher than the national average, and this trend has continued since the onset of the economic downturn. It is clear that more needs to be done to address the unique economic and educational challenges facing our districts.

The President's proposed Community College to Career Fund provides a framework for community colleges to work with industry leaders and businesses in creating programs that will enable workers to fill jobs in high-demand industries, especially in areas such as health care, technology, construction, and other promising fields. We believe this

initiative could have a significant impact on the educational and employment needs of the territories.

In this regard, we recognize and support the President's proposal to invest in our community colleges and request that it ensure the full inclusion of community colleges, education centers, and stakeholders in the U.S. territories. We make this request in keeping with the President's stated goal of fostering equity and opportunity for all students and believe it is critical to developing and supporting a high-skilled workforce in our districts.

We look forward to your support to include our constituents in the President's Community College to Career Fund. We also extend an open invitation to you, Dr. Jill Biden, and other administration officials to visit the territories and witness firsthand the innovative steps and unique contributions our community colleges are making to build our local workforces.

Sincerely,

Madeleine Z. Bordallo
Member of Congress

Eni Faleomavaega
Member of Congress

Pedro R. Pierluisi
Member of Congress

Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan
Member of Congress

Donna Christensen
Member of Congress