



# BOB CASEY

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## The Funding Community College Infrastructure and Community College Infrastructure Financing Acts

*U.S. Senator Bob Casey*

More than two-thirds of jobs today require some education and training beyond high school, but many Americans lack access to quality postsecondary education. Across the country, students face a shortage of local community colleges, which are usually more accessible and affordable than four-year colleges or universities. Approximately [35 million people](#), or 10 percent of our Nation's population, live in education deserts: areas with zero or one public broad-access college nearby. While students from wealthy families are the least likely to be affected by distance when making decisions about college, local availability of postsecondary institutions is important for the vast majority of low-income students, who choose to attend a college [within 60 miles](#) of their home.

Often, communities that would benefit the most from additional community college offerings are the least able to afford them. Additionally, because of funding challenges, existing community colleges are often unable to invest in their own infrastructure to comprehensively meet the needs of their students.

To address these challenges, the **Funding Community College Infrastructure Act** would provide \$10 billion over 10 years to create a grant program in the Department of Education that would expand access to community college. Local sponsors, including existing community colleges, states, local governments, and municipalities, would be eligible for grant funding to establish or expand community colleges and programs to underserved areas, as well as address infrastructure needs at existing community colleges to help them better serve students.

The **Community College Infrastructure Financing Act** would create a bond program to provide interest-free financing for community colleges, similar to the former Qualified Zone Academy Bond (QZAB) program that helped school districts finance construction and renovation projects. This bill would allow local sponsors, including existing community colleges, local governments, municipalities, and states to issue "Qualified Community College Bonds" to establish or expand community colleges and programs to underserved areas, as well as address existing infrastructure needs to help them better serve students. The bond's interest would be covered through a federal tax credit to the bondholder in lieu of an interest payment by the municipality.

Specifically, the **Funding Community College Infrastructure and Community College Infrastructure Financing Acts** would both:

- **Fund** projects to create, expand or enhance community colleges in low-income communities and counties or metropolitan areas where there are no such institutions, including:
  - Establishing a new community college or opening a branch of an existing community college;
  - Upgrading or enhancing existing facilities;
  - Training professors and other school personnel;
  - Constructing or expanding on-campus facilities to provide child care;
  - Providing affordable housing options to students and staff; and
  - Connecting students to transportation through partnerships with public transit.
- **Prioritize** institutions that have partnerships with local high schools, four-year institutions, or state workforce development boards, encouraging colleges to maintain relationships with local entities, and prioritize institutions that have partnerships with Minority-Serving Institutions.