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## LEGISLATIVE TALKING POINTS 2021

### Background

- The success of Wyoming's economic and social future is dependent on the educational attainment of its citizens, especially post-secondary attainment.
- Wyoming's higher education attainment goal is that 67 percent of the state's working population 25–64 years of age will possess a valuable post-secondary credential (certificate or degree) by 2025, and a secondary goal of 82 percent attainment by 2040.
- Wyoming's community colleges enroll the majority of students in higher education in the state, produce enough high school diplomas or equivalencies to be the third largest school district in the state.
- All 23 counties in Wyoming benefit from the programs, services, and graduates of Wyoming community colleges yet only seven of these counties provide direct local funding support for these institutions.
- Since 2010 state funding for Wyoming's Community Colleges has been reduced by \$94M (this does not include impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic which amounts to \$85M cost to the colleges).
  - Local revenues declined 15.12% during this time
  - Tuition increased by 96.4% over the last decade
  - 281 jobs cut since 2016 (or 16% of the entire community college workforce)
  - Numerous programs and degree closures
- Wyoming's state revenue picture is dire, and the state's tax system is unbalanced and unsustainable, yet its overall tax rates are below that of any similar comparison states suggesting capacity exists to increase tax revenues to support the state's needs.
- Wyoming's community colleges are the solution for the state's future, and its citizens, businesses, and elected officials are asking for more from these institutions at a time when the colleges are grappling with doing less because of financial constraints.

### Legislative Action Needed:

- The Legislature must enact reasonable increases to existing tax rates that would generate additional revenue necessary to support the continued provision of services Wyoming citizens desire and the state requires for the benefit of its future.
- The Legislature should incorporate a mechanism through which all 23 Wyoming counties who benefit from the state's community colleges provides financial support for these institutions through mechanisms such as ad valorem (property) taxes.
  - The WCCC Sustainable Funding Report recommends the following:

- Statewide sales (a portion of which could be dedicated for the community colleges)
  - Statewide mill levy
  - Use of an appropriate amount of the LSRA to stabilize community college funding for the 2020 enacted cuts and some portion or all of the existing deficit until sustainable funding measures are enacted by the Legislature.
- Provide more tools in the toolbox:
  - Allow the community college Boards of Trustees through changes to statute that would provide the Trustees the authority to impose an additional mill levy, from one additional mill to two.
  - Increase the four-year statutory limitation to eight years on the additional five mills colleges may secure by the affirmative vote of the residents of the community college district, for the operations, capital projects, maintenance, etc. of the colleges.
- Consider creative solutions for funding such as allowing local optional sales and use taxes to be used for workforce training funding, if agreed upon by the district's municipalities and enacted through the vote of the electors of the community.
- Support capital construction and major maintenance to allow the colleges to meet the needs of industry and maintain facilities to meet the needs of students.
- Adjust HB 80 to incentivize distance education, consortium programming, consolidating in programming, non-credit and apprenticeship programs, and external cost adjustments.
- Support capital construction and restore major maintenance fu
- Establish and provide the initial investment into a Wyoming adult student financial aid program focused on addressing financial need and to encourage the enrollment/re-enrollment of Wyoming's adults into post-secondary education or training; and
- Allow for a vote of the citizens of Wyoming to determine if they desire the inclusion of Wyoming's community colleges in the state constitution.