

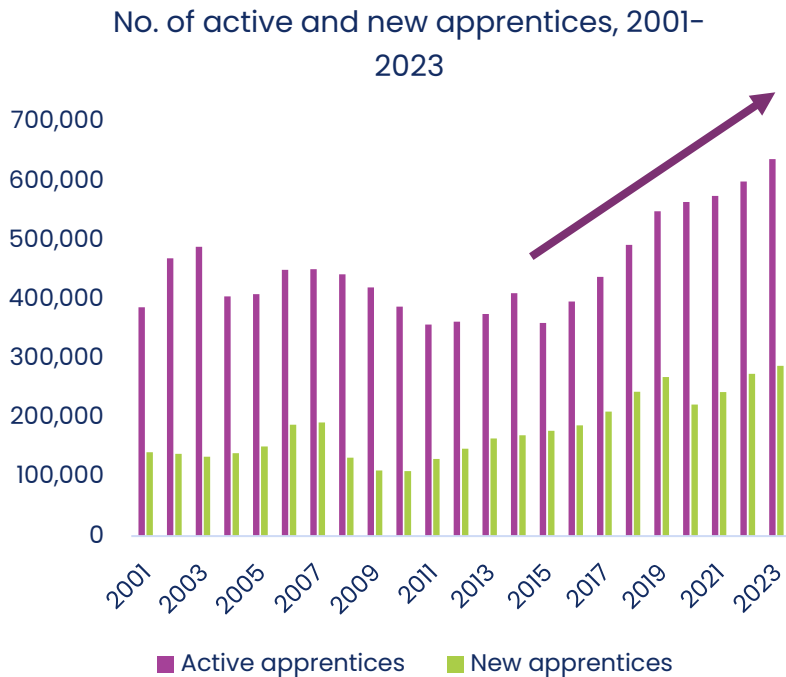
# Scaling Opportunity:

Reviewing the Landscape of Illinois,  
Community Colleges, and  
Apprenticeships

7/9/2025

# The National Picture

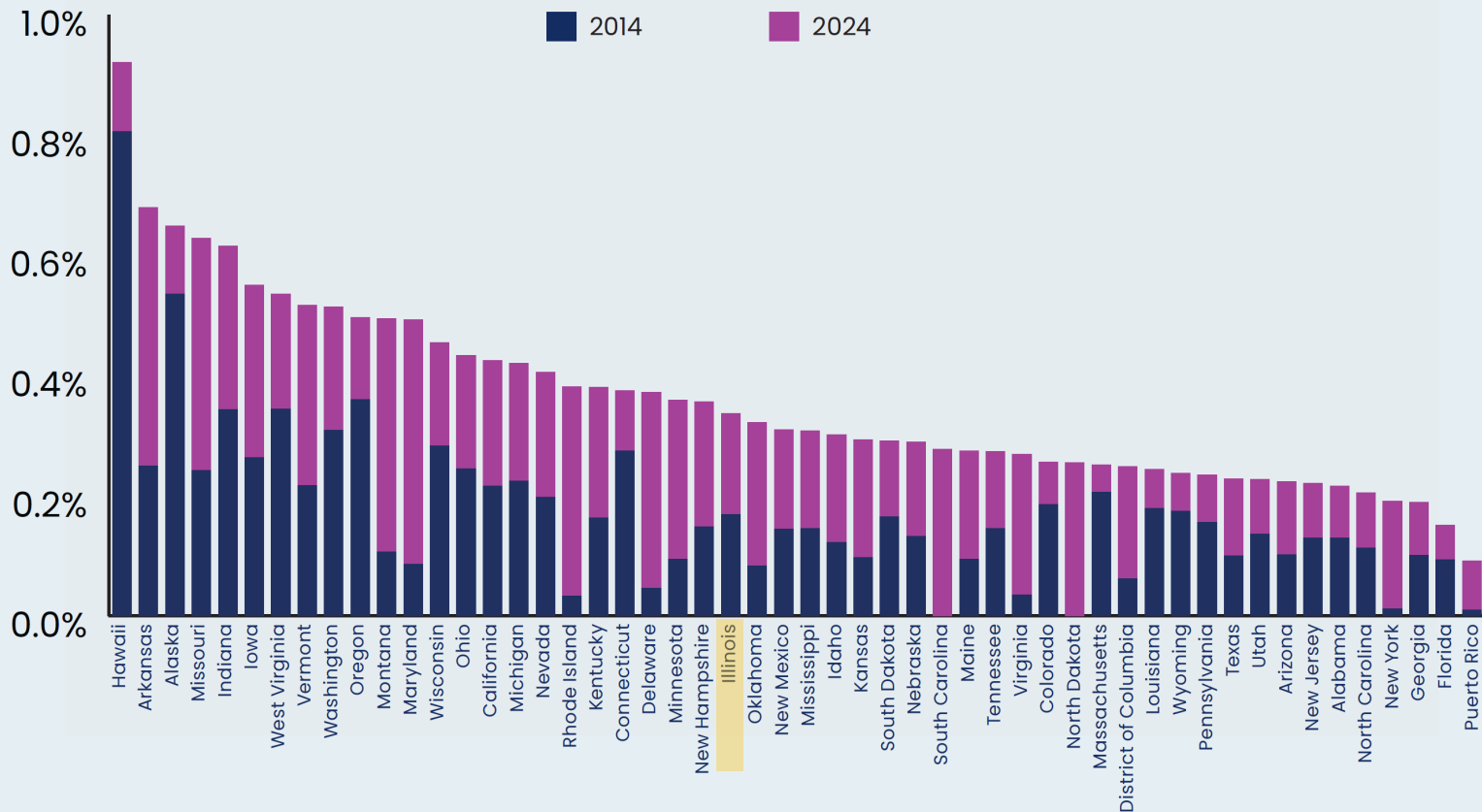
Apprenticeships have been growing since 2015 ...



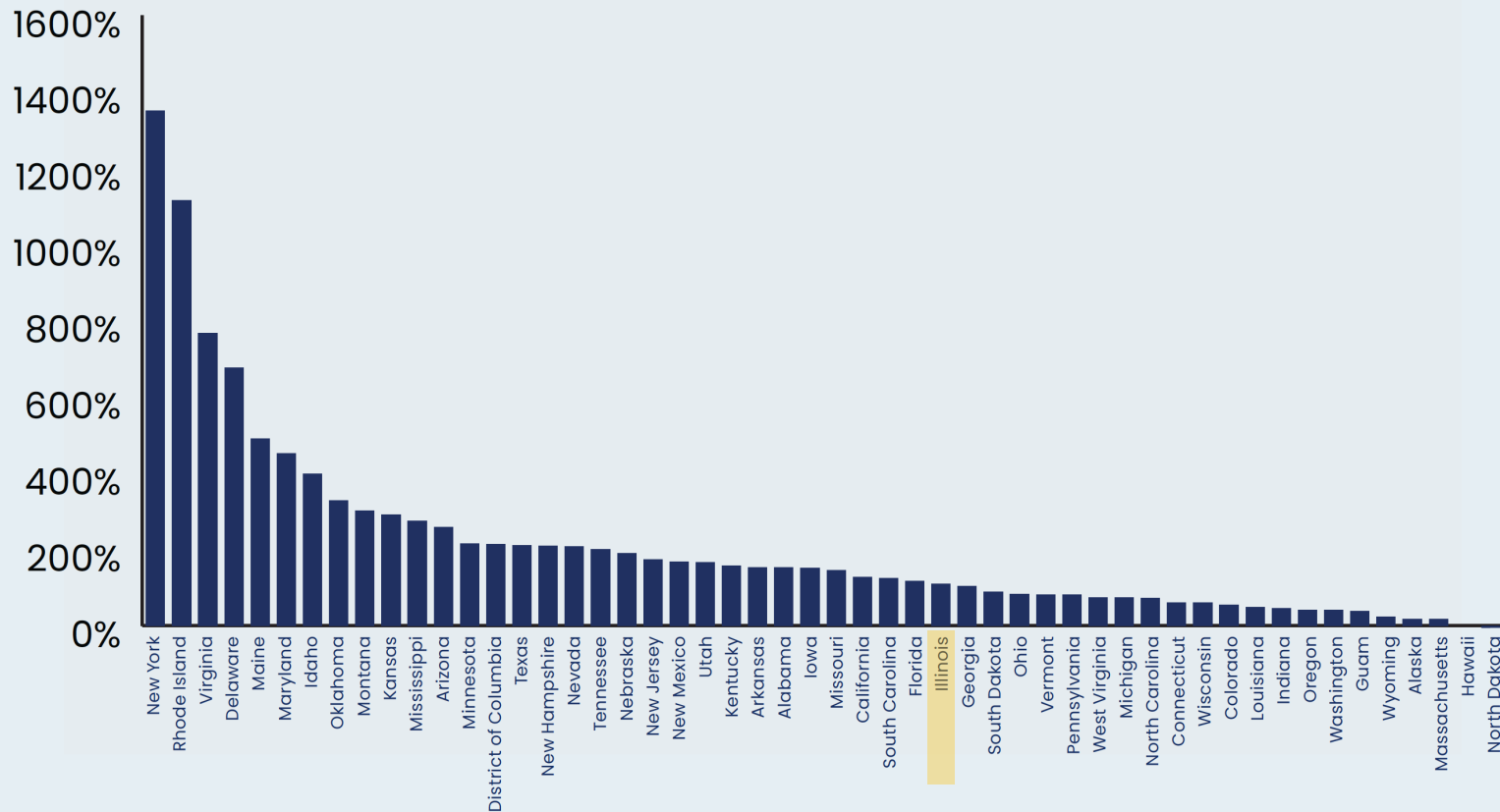
... but remain far behind international competitors

Country	Active Apprentices	Apprentices as a % of labor force
United States	561,000	0.33%
Scotland	39,000	0.71%
Austria	109,000	1.17%
Canada	459,000	2.07%
Australia	352,000	2.32%
England	737,000	2.48%
Germany	1,217,000	2.65%
France	1,016,000	3.19%
Switzerland	210,000	3.93%

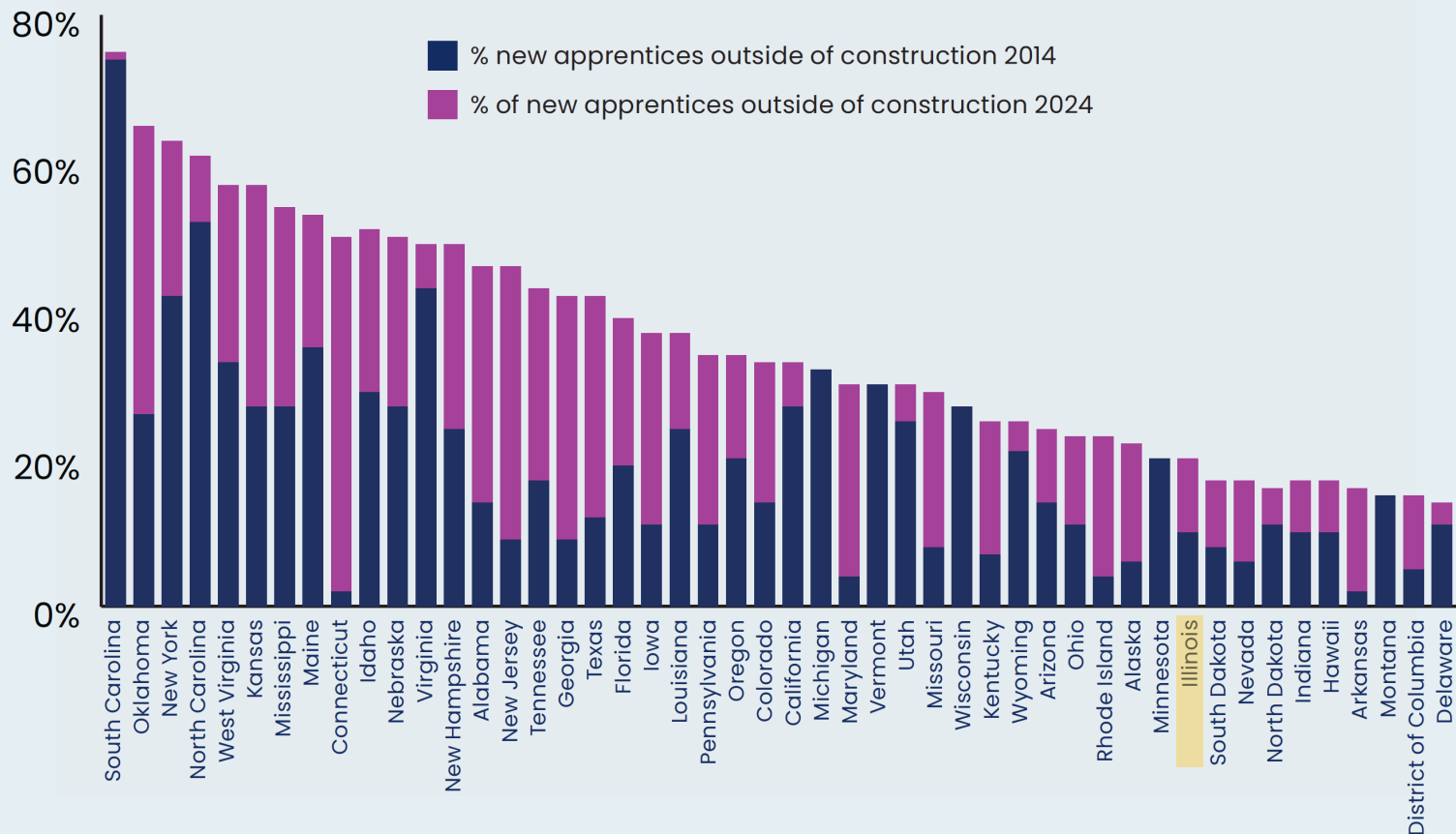
## Active Apprentices as % of Labor Force by State, 2014–2024



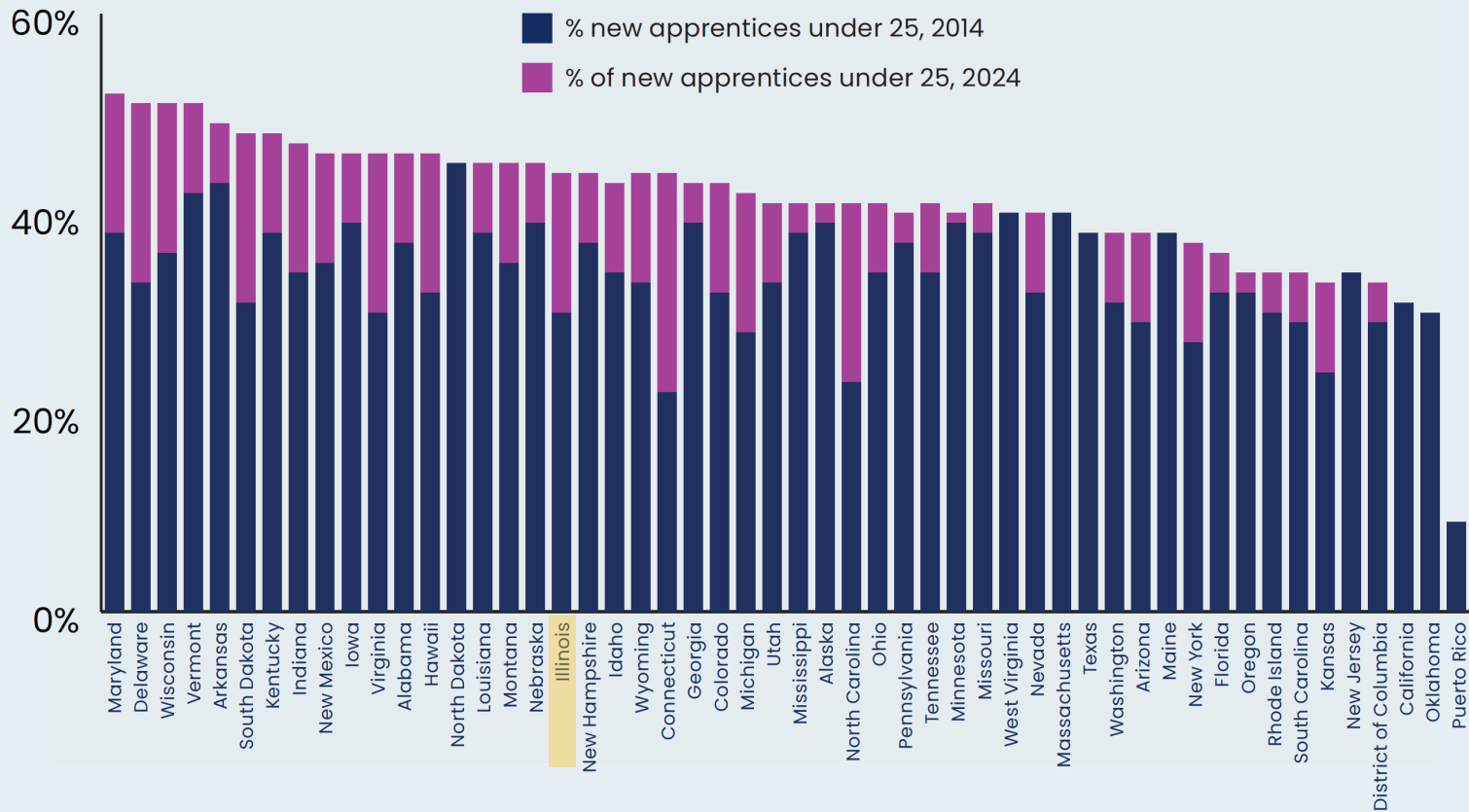
## Growth in New Apprentices by State, 2014 to 2023



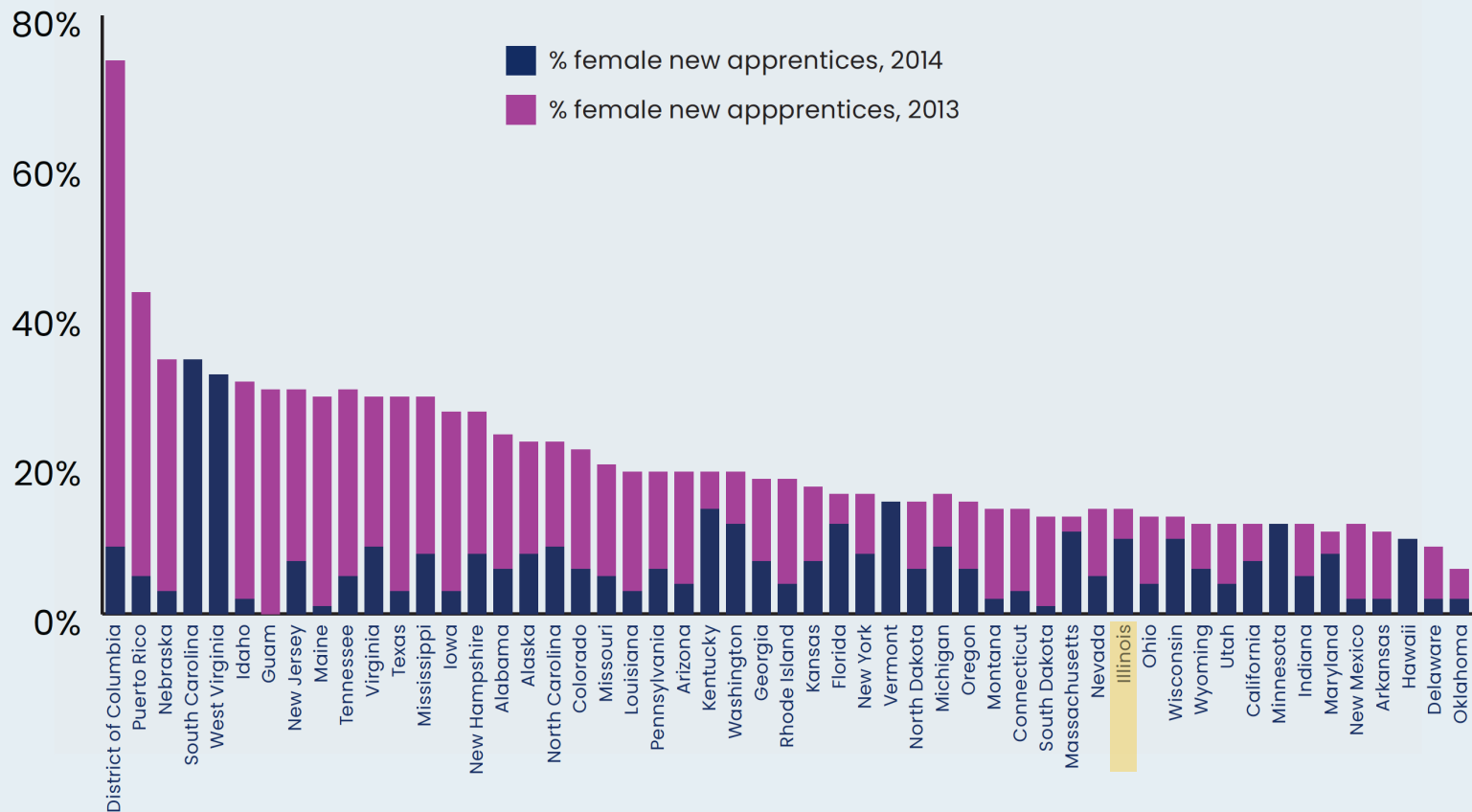
## Proportion of New Apprentices Outside of Construction, 2014–2023



## Proportion of New Apprentices Under 25, 2014 to 2023



## % New Apprentices Female 2014 to 2023



# The Illinois Picture

21,905 <i>Number of active apprentices in 2024</i> 4 <sup>th</sup> highest	8,484 <i>Number of new apprentices in 2023</i> 6 <sup>th</sup> highest	0.34% <i>Active apprentices as % of labor force in 2024</i> 24 <sup>th</sup> highest	81% <i>% new apprentices in 2023 in construction</i> Down from 90% in 2014
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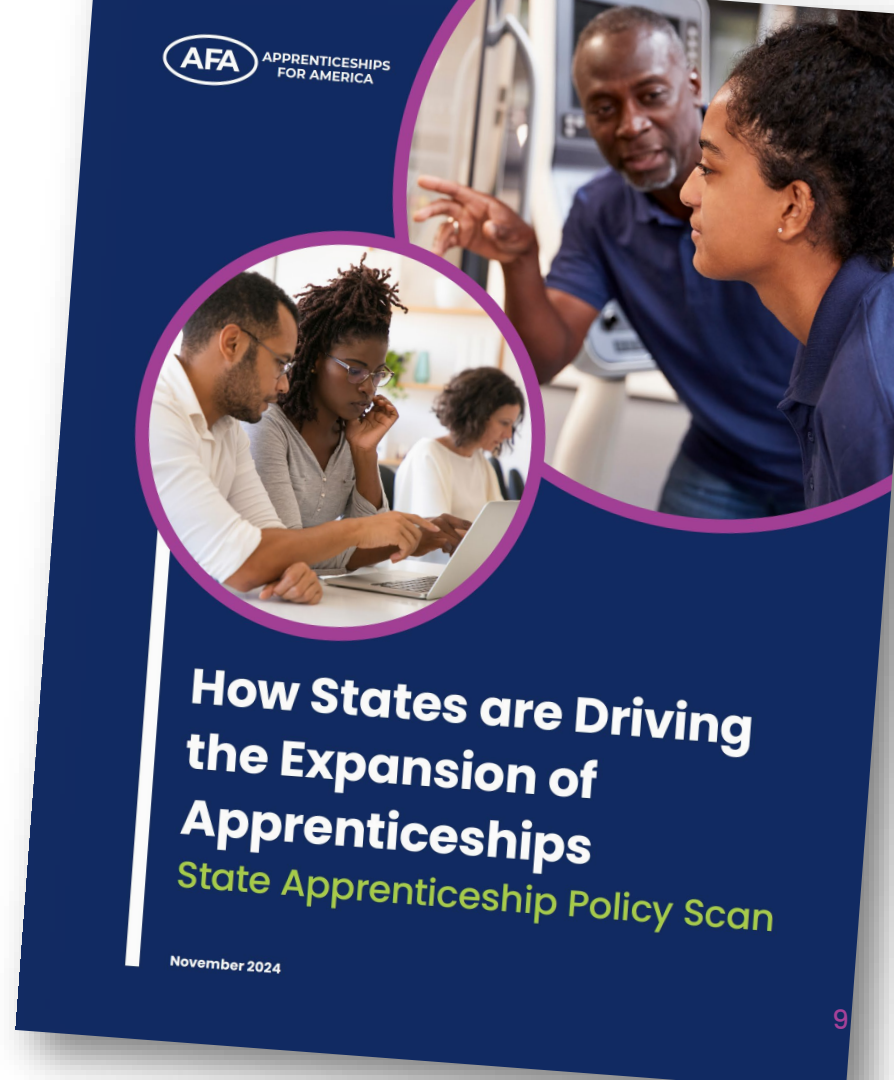
State or federal registration?	Supportive legislature and/or executive?	Apprenticeships target?	State funding for apprenticeship?
✓ Federal	✓ 66 bills referencing apprenticeship in last two years	No formal target	✓ State funding available for pre-apprenticeship.  State apprenticeship tax credit – \$3.5–5k per apprentice

Other stand-outs for Illinois:

- One of three states to reference apprenticeship in high school graduation requirements
- One of six states to use apprenticeships in nursing

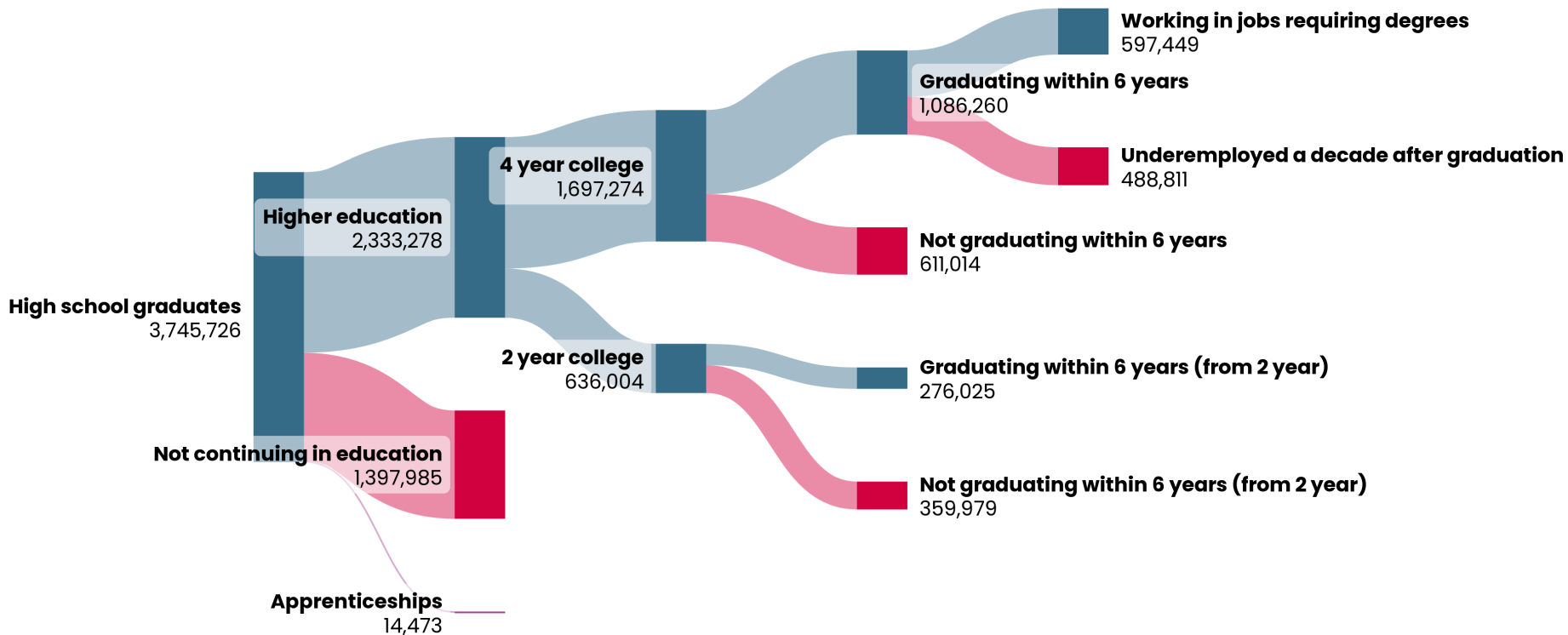


**Want to know more? Check out:**  
**[ApprenticeshipsforAmerica.org](https://ApprenticeshipsforAmerica.org)**



# **The National Picture: Developments in Apprenticeship**

# A Changing Narrative: The Problem with College for All

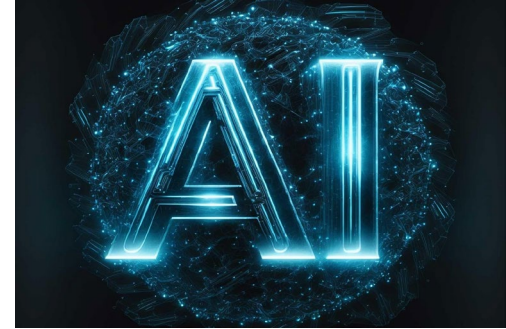




Cost / Debt



Quality



Secular Changes

Only 52% of high school students say they are considering a college degree, **a decline of more than ten percentage points** since before the pandemic. At the same time, **65%** believe that learning after high school should take place on the job, through internships or apprenticeships.

In a [national survey conducted by the Progressive Policy Institute](#), voters were asked which policy would be most effective in helping working people get ahead. Nearly three-quarters—**74%**—selected:  
*More public investment in apprenticeships and career pathways to help non-college workers acquire better skills.*

Among potential federal actions tested in [recent polling by national nonprofit Jobs for the Future](#), expanding apprenticeship opportunities emerged as a leading priority. Eighty-four percent of voters support programs that allow individuals to earn a living while developing in-demand skills.

That support cuts across party lines: **88% of Democrats, 80% of Independents, and 82% of Republicans say they favor expanding apprenticeship opportunities.**

# Executive Orders



- Within 120 days, Labor, Commerce, and Education to produce a plan to **reach and surpass 1 million new active apprentices**, identifying:
  - Avenues to expand apprenticeship to new industries;
  - Measures to scale the model across the country;
  - Enhancing link between education and apprenticeships, including through Perkins and federal student aid;



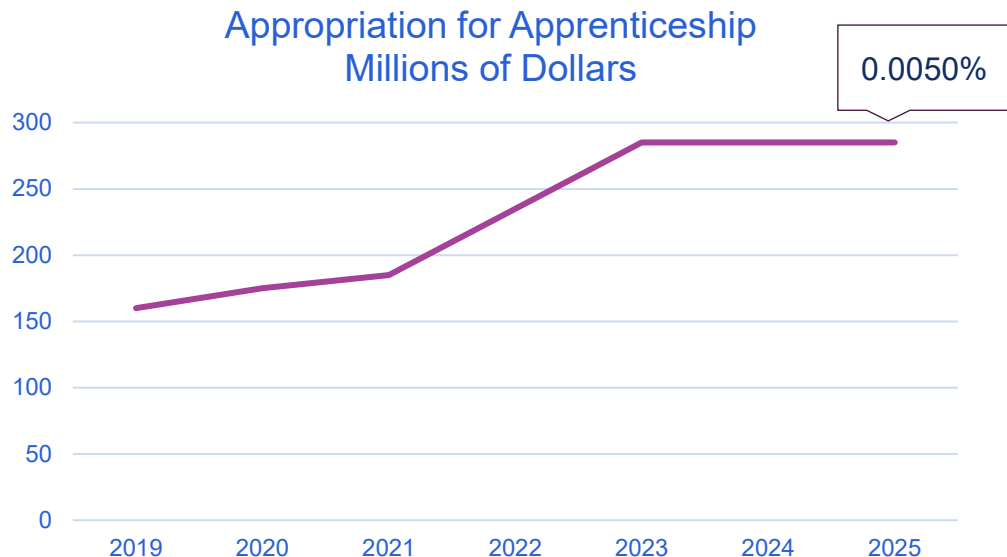
- Within 120 days, Labor to **increase participation in AI-related apprenticeships** by:
  - Establishing specific goals for growing apprenticeships in AI-related occupations across industries;
  - Using intermediary contracts and discretionary funding; and
  - Supporting the creation of industry-developed standards to be registered on a nationwide basis, enabling individual employers to adopt the standards without requiring individual registry.

# Congress

- A Stronger Workforce for America Act (WIOA Reauthorization)
- American Apprenticeship Act (Tuition Support)
- Apprenticeship Pathways Act (Youth Apprenticeship)
- Apprenticeships to College Act (Apprenticeship Articulation to College)



# Spending – Not!



Spending on apprenticeships as % of government spending	
England	0.22%
France	1.23%
Germany	0.36%
Canada	0.09%
Scotland	0.15%
Australia	4.60%



# Needed: A New Policy Framework



National Apprenticeship Act of 1937

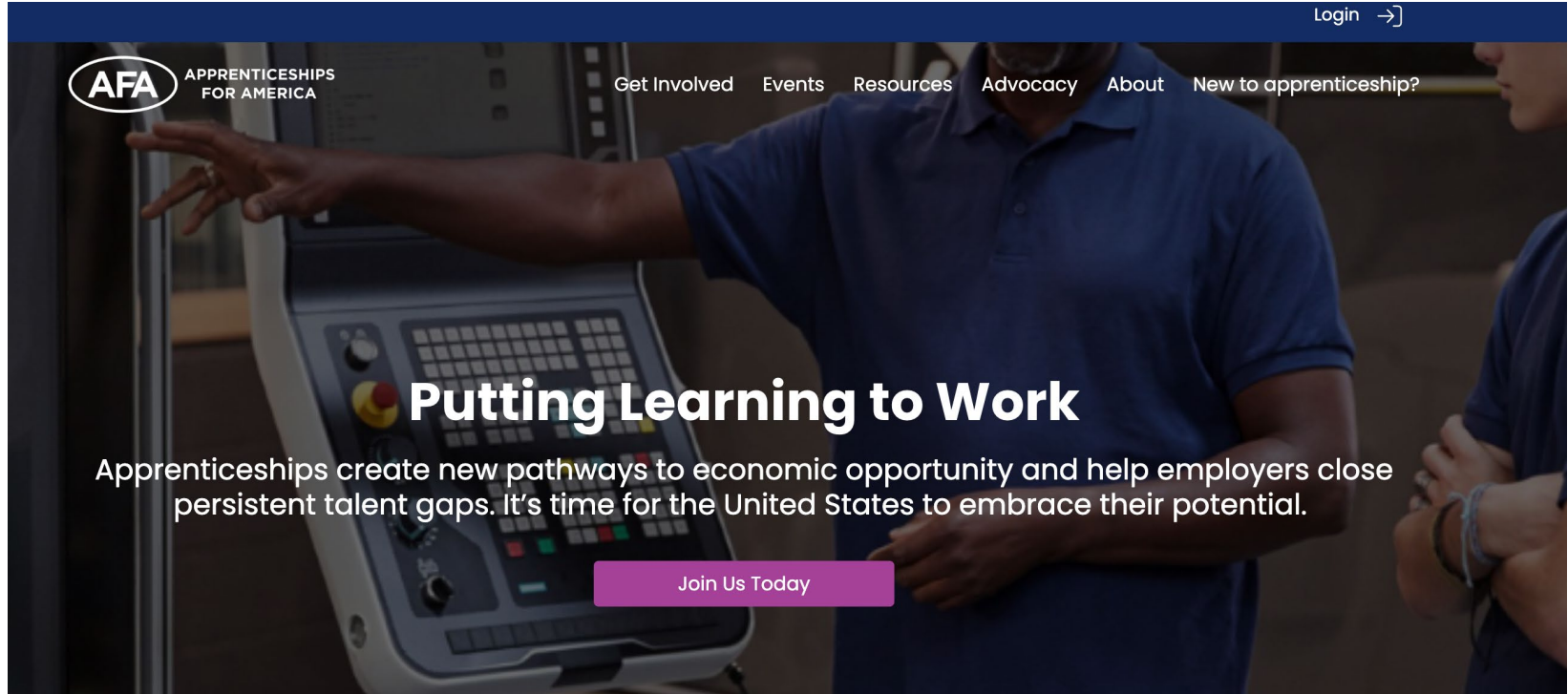
Apprentice Protection



A New National Apprenticeship Act

Program  
Funding  
Ecosystem  
Multi-stakeholder  
Scale

# Do You Love this Stuff?

A screenshot of the AFA website's main banner. The background is a photograph of a man in a blue polo shirt pointing at a control panel of a machine. The banner includes the AFA logo and navigation links at the top, a main headline, a descriptive paragraph, and a call-to-action button.

Login →

**AFA** APPRENTICESHIPS  
FOR AMERICA

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## Putting Learning to Work

Apprenticeships create new pathways to economic opportunity and help employers close persistent talent gaps. It's time for the United States to embrace their potential.

[Join Us Today](#)

**[ApprenticeshipsforAmerica.org](https://ApprenticeshipsforAmerica.org)**

# How Community Colleges Can Help Scale US Apprenticeships



# Community colleges are well placed to drive expansion



Community colleges already have the resources and expertise to deliver high quality Related Instruction, and to navigate state and federal funding.



Some are starting to develop more expansive roles in apprenticeship – acting as sponsors and generating demand

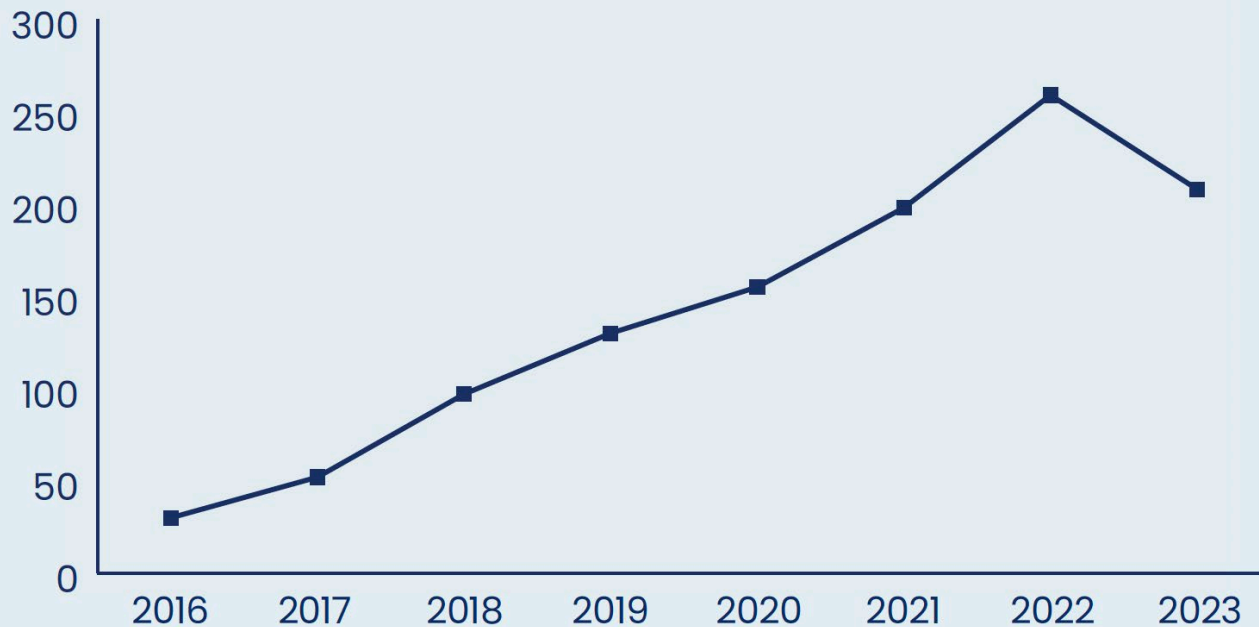


We estimate currently only 3% – 15,500 apprentices – are sponsored by community colleges.

**If just 5% of community college enrollments were in apprenticeship programs, that would mean an additional 442,000 apprentices**

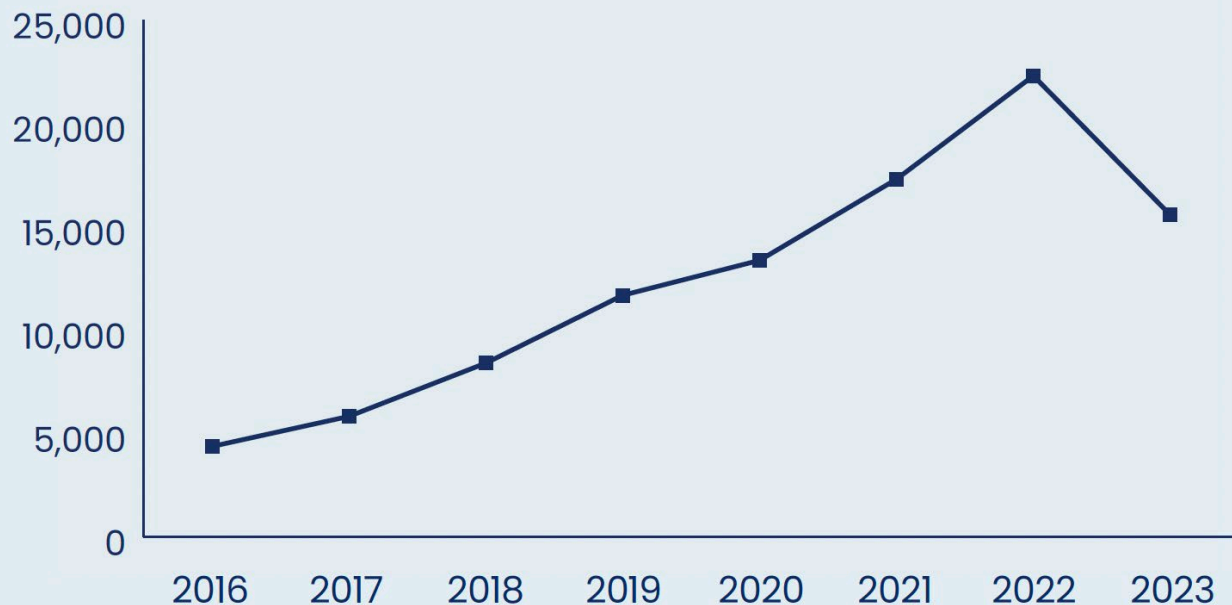
# Growth of CC's as Apprenticeship Sponsors

Figure 1. Community college program sponsors with active apprentices



# Growth of Apprentices in CC-sponsored Programs

Figure 2. Active apprentices in community college sponsored programs



# Functions of Community Colleges in Apprenticeships

- CCs play many roles in the apprenticeship ecosystem:
  - Delivering RTI
  - Development of OJT
  - Engaging and Organizing Employer Partners
  - Recruiting Apprentices
  - Student Support
  - Funding
  - Registration and Management

# The Role of Community Colleges – A Few Observations (1)

- General
  - Community colleges' multifaceted roles in the apprenticeship ecosystem
  - Involvement in RTI, employer engagement, and program management
  - Importance of support services for apprentices
- Diverse levels of engagement
  - Variation in community colleges' involvement in apprenticeship programs
  - Programs ranging from small, niche initiatives to large-scale efforts
  - Influence of local labor market demands and regional employer needs
- Employer Engagement
  - Importance of strong partnerships with employers
  - Strategies for engagement: outreach, leveraging relationships, state incentives
  - Challenges in consistent employer recruitment



# The Role of Community Colleges – A Few Observations (2)

- Sustainable Funding Models
  - Need for a braided funding approach
  - Combining state and federal grants, workforce funds, and corporate sponsorships
- Supportive Services
  - Importance of financial aid, guidance, and material support
  - Addressing barriers to participation in apprenticeship programs
  - Enhancing program effectiveness through support services
- Barriers and Opportunities
  - Misalignment of funding models and administrative burdens
  - Challenges in employer recruitment and program management
  - Opportunities: improved retention, cost reduction, and workforce readiness

# Take Aways

- **Potential for Community Colleges**

- A strategic shift linking academic and work-based learning could revitalize community colleges, reduce costs, and expand U.S. apprenticeships.

- **Existing Involvement**

- Many community colleges already provide Related Technical Instruction (RTI) and have strong ties with employers, but scale remains limited.

- **Challenges**

- Recruiting employers and expanding programs require significant effort, funding, and incentives. Colleges often lack the resources or motivation to scale apprenticeship programs.

- **Employer Demand**

- Catalyzing employer demand is crucial for expanding apprenticeships. Successful examples, like Apprenticeship Carolina, highlight the need for dedicated staff and resources.

# Needed: New Tools for Expansion

- **Increased Federal Funding:** AFA sees a critical need to advocate for substantial increases in apprenticeship funding, similar to commitments seen in other countries.
  - **“Pay Per Apprentice” Fund:** A proposed federal incentive offering \$3–5,000 per apprentice and \$1,000 for completion could significantly motivate colleges to expand programs.
- **State and Local Support:** Count apprentices as full-time equivalent (FTE) students for state funding, reducing costs for community colleges.
- **Pell Grants and GI Bill:** Modify eligibility to allow use of these funds for apprenticeships, potentially saving federal costs and increasing student earnings.
- **Leveraging Federal Commitments:** Utilize incentives from industrial policies and other initiatives to support community college work on apprenticeship

