January 28, 2014
Committee on Ways and Means
Affordable Care Act's (ACA) hearing
Thomas J. Snyder
President, Ivy Tech Community College

Thank you, Mr. Chairman for the opportunity to speak with you on behalf of Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana's 200,000 students and nearly 8,000 faculty and staff. We also want to thank you Chairman Camp and Ranking Member Levin for scheduling a hearing on these important matters. And thank you Representative Young for your leadership in Indiana.

As you, Chairman Camp, have stated when announcing this hearing we must be working together to remove obstacles to individuals finding full-time work. Our focus at Ivy Tech, as it is for community colleges across the country, is to employ thousands of faculty and to educate thousands of students for future careers. The community college structure, unique to the United States, is also our country's most affordable and accessible option to higher education. If we are to close the global attainment gap, we must do all we can to keep it both affordable and accessible.

In Indiana we have one statewide community college. We are the largest such system in the United States serving those 200,000 students at 31-degree granting locations and 75 additional educational sites. We are an open admissions institution thus serving a complex student body, some looking to enter the workforce soon after completing high school and others looking for a career change and entering college for the first time, maybe 10 or 20 years after high school. Many students start at the community college and then transfer to a four-year school. Among Indiana's public institution, Ivy Tech has more than half of all Pell Grant recipients and more than half of African American students enrolled in higher education in the state. For many of our students, Ivy Tech may be their one chance in life to get the education needed by today's workforce. Our mission is unique to higher education and I would argue that community colleges are more critical than any other institutions in order to rebuild the middle class.

One of the keys to our success is our adjunct faculty team of more than 4,500. Many are practitioners in their field who bring real-life, real-time experience into the classroom. It helps our students be more career-ready when they leave us. Adjunct faculty bring in much needed diversity into our classrooms in a variety of ways and they expose local business and industry to the community college. Moreover, these adjuncts are often the very individuals we consider when we have full-time positions to fill, a critical resource for the college. In fact in the last four years, we have placed more than 500 adjuncts into full-time positions.

Now before I speak to some elements of the Affordable Care Act I want to be very clear that Ivy Tech Community College is a firm supporter of ensuring Americans have access to health care. However I would like to highlight some serious issues we face with respect to certain provisions specifically related to the 30-hour rule, which are having a significant impact on institutions such as ours, as well as for many of the individuals we employ. We are pleased that this bill authored by Congressman Young will bring clarity to the 30-hour rule.

The Affordable Care Act has caused us to assess the hours of teaching we can offer to our adjunct faculty. We have done this with limited guidance and honestly it has not been easy. Like many community colleges our funding does not allow us to absorb large unfunded mandates such as any employee who exceeds 30 hours being offered health insurance. The impact to us would be between $10-$12 million. The potential penalties we could face for exceeding these 30 hours, knowing we have thousands of adjuncts, of course is not an option we could even consider. Adjustments were necessary so we have limited the hours adjunct faculty can teach. In addition while the IRS has said prep time must be a factor we are just not sure how to factor it into these 30 hours or what other aspects must be included in a determination. We do not know when the 30 hour threshold has been crossed by an employee and it would be nearly unmanageable to track such a thing in higher education without clear definitions. If we don't receive more clarity on how to implement these requirements, community colleges and other institutions of higher education are being put at risk for litigation and complaints.

All of this results in having to find more adjunct faculty to meet the student demand, which results in yet another challenge, the lack of additional credentialed faculty in certain disciplines causing classes to be cancelled and students to be turned away.

The uncertainty of implementing the 30-hour rule has impacted colleges across the country, but none more dramatically than the community college. Because of the unique role of the adjunct in the community college, the end result may be less access for the students and the inability of faculty to stay with one college. Some of our adjuncts have taken positions at other institutions to fill the financial gap. This takes away faculty's exposure to potential full-time opportunities in the future.

If 40 hours were the measurement for full-time, it would allow institutions more flexibility. We would still need further guidance and more clarity on how to treat the hours, but we would be able to manage the process much easier than today. We had planned to expand the advising role for adjuncts as we move to a more intrusive advising model, critical for retention. However the uncertainty around the 30-hour rule has made this difficulty to implement. This creates a real challenge in retaining our students and moving them to completion. Adjuncts could be a vital resource to help us in this area.

This discussion is necessary. This is about ensuring we are able to provide the best educational product we can at Ivy Tech while protecting the jobs of our adjunct faculty and their working conditions. At Ivy Tech Community College we work to ensure we have the right resources in the right place to train hundreds of thousands of Hoosiers for the jobs of the future.

Thank you for the opportunity to visit with you today.