

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
The Capitol, S-230
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
The Capitol, S-221
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Republican Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The [Postsecondary Data Collaborative](#) (PostsecData) and the [National Skills Coalition](#), in cooperation with the undersigned organizations and individuals, urge Congress to pass the College Transparency Act (CTA) as part of any end-of-the-year agreement, including appropriations legislation. This is particularly important as more than half of the members of the 116th Congress has cosponsored the bill, and it is likely other higher education provisions will be included. CTA is needed so that policymakers can comprehensively measure the outcomes of policy changes and investment included in the legislation, students and families will have transparent information as they make critical decisions, colleges and universities will have access to the data they seek to support student success initiatives, and, as the nation rebuilds its economy, employers will have the data they need to strengthen their talent pipeline.

This strongly bipartisan, bicameral bill would help students and families, policymakers, institutions and employers to make informed decisions by providing more complete information about college access, success, costs, and outcomes. This information empowers students and families to make well-informed choices about their education, policymakers and institutions to craft evidence-based policies to help students succeed, and employers to navigate the talent pipeline they need to grow the economy. Without complete, representative data that counts all students, equity will be out of reach.

The research is abundantly clear: Investing in a college education pays off. But while college is worth it on average, students, policymakers, institutions and employers cannot answer crucial questions about which postsecondary programs provide an adequate return on investment for which students. Students and taxpayers have a right to know what they can expect in return for their college investment. Yet, existing policies prevent us from answering basic questions, such as:

- What are national completion rates for part-time and transfer students of color?
- How do college access, affordability, and completion vary by race, ethnicity, and income?
- How much do students borrow, and can they repay their loans?
- How many non-completers from a particular college never reenroll, and how many transfer to finish their degree at another institution?

- Which students go on to succeed in the workforce?

Answers to these questions would help students and families choose programs that demonstrate strong outcomes, while helping policymakers and educators to implement policies and practices that help more students succeed. For the marketplace to function effectively, all these stakeholders need access to high-quality information that reflects all types of students and can look at outcomes across state lines. The federal government—with its access to existing data, including on employment and earnings—is uniquely positioned to compile that information, while reducing institutional reporting burdens.

The College Transparency Act:

- Overturns the ban on student-level data collection in the Higher Education Act;
- Creates a secure, privacy protected student-level data network within the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) using strong security standards and data governance protocols;
- Accurately reports on student outcomes including enrollment, completion and post-college success across colleges and programs;
- Leverages existing data at federal agencies and institutional data by matching a limited set of data to calculate aggregate information to answer questions critical to understanding and improving student success;
- Protects all students by limiting data disclosures, prohibiting the sale of data, penalizing illegal data use, protecting vulnerable students, prohibiting the use of the data for law enforcement, safeguarding personally identifiable information, and requiring notice to students and regular audits of the system;
- Streamlines burdensome federal reporting requirements for postsecondary institutions;
- Provides information disaggregated by race, ethnicity and Pell Grant receipt status to identify inequities in students' success;
- Requires a user-friendly website to ensure the data are transparent, informative, and accessible for students, parents, policymakers, and employers; and
- Feeds aggregate information back to states and institutions so they can develop and implement targeted, data-informed strategies aimed at supporting student success.

The College Transparency Act represents broad consensus among students, colleges and universities, employers, and policymakers that a secure, privacy-protected postsecondary student data system is the only way to give students the information they need to make informed college choices. That is why we are coming together to urge Congress to pass this bill **now** to provide accurate, timely, and high-quality aggregate data in a user-friendly, transparent way for students and families, policymakers, institutions and employers who have a right to know answers to key questions about student access and success.

Sincerely,

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