



May 5, 2025

The Honorable Susan Collins
Chair
Appropriations Committee
US Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Appropriations Committee
US Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Chair
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education,
and Related Agencies Appropriations
Subcommittee
US Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Ranking Member
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education,
and Related Agencies Appropriations
Subcommittee
US Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Collins, Murray, Capito, and Baldwin,

The Data Quality Campaign (DQC) and the undersigned organizations are writing to urge you to **at least maintain current levels of investment for the Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) and Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI) grant programs** for fiscal year 2026. We also know that for every state to build a comprehensive statewide P-20W data system will require an investment of \$100 million for the SLDS grant program and \$40 million for the WDQI system in the future. To ensure that both programs can effectively operate and disburse funds to grantees, this investment should be accompanied by increased staffing capacity.

The SLDS and WDQI programs play an essential role in assisting states with the design, development, implementation, security, and use of longitudinal data systems. The recent terminations of data collection related contracts and staff reductions at the U.S. Department of Education, particularly those that oversee the SLDS grant program and provide technical assistance and support to state data leaders, imperils the ability of states to grow, modernize, secure, and use their statewide longitudinal data systems in a manner that advances students' academic achievement and economic mobility. We remain concerned that these and other recent actions have already impacted the timeline for awarding these funds to states. Moreover, research, data collection, and evaluation are essential to helping Congress answer fundamental questions about student achievement and related outcomes and ensure taxpayer dollars are being used effectively. It is important SLDS and WDQI continue to be funded sustainably as transparency into program outcomes and funding effectiveness is more vital than ever.

Data systems are an indispensable tool for making informed decisions about priorities within communities. DQC's infographic, "[Grace's Path to Success](#)," highlights how students and their families can use data about needed skills, job options, and available postsecondary programs to successfully chart their course into high-quality, in-demand careers. Through their existing data systems, states are working to provide students like Grace with the insights they need to make informed decisions about their career pathways. Scores on the most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress highlight the complex and intertwined academic challenges facing our country and demonstrate the importance of ensuring

that students have information to make thoughtful decisions about their academic paths in relation to where they hope to go. This kind of data transparency can only be achieved through robust data systems. States need federal support to evolve their data systems so that they are oriented toward access and support responsive policymaking. Currently, the best mechanism for providing federal financial support is bolstering funding through the SLDS and WDQI grant programs.

SLDS and WDQI grants—alongside related agency technical assistance and guidance—support state policymakers, practitioners, individuals, and others responsible for improving data collection and use. Since their creation, the SLDS and WDQI grant programs have helped states establish longitudinal data systems that both safeguard data and provide families, students, educators, workforce leaders, and other officials access to better, timelier information. These data systems are valuable because they:

- Enable policymakers and practitioners to answer questions about program outcomes and make key information transparent to families, students, and the public;
- Advance work on transparency through the use of linked and interoperable data; and
- Support program evaluations and studies that examine long-term learning and other trends and identify opportunity gaps.

Unfortunately, many data systems are outdated, siloed, and under-equipped to meet current and future needs. For example, according to a DQC analysis of the most recent National Center for Education Statistics SLDS survey data, over 90 percent of states reported collecting data across multiple agencies, but only 13 states reported the ability to link their data systems from early childhood all the way through to the workforce.¹

States and localities need federal support to update critical data infrastructure so that it encourages nimble decisionmaking and drives positive impacts for individuals and communities. Updating state data systems and programs—from early childhood through K–12, postsecondary, and workforce—will enable data systems to be more effective, accountable, and efficient by enabling leaders to:

- **Identify unemployed or underemployed workers who are eligible for Pell Grants or other sources of financial aid to support enrollment in postsecondary education or training to reskill and upskill for new careers.** Connecticut used integrated data in its SLDS, Preschool through 20 Workforce Information Network (P20WIN), to develop a report that highlights trends to better understand and re-engage youth who are neither working nor in school.
- **Promote the alignment of education and career training programs to workforce needs so individuals are prepared for high-demand, high-wage careers that are critical to a state's economy and infrastructure.** Kentucky uses integrated workforce and postsecondary data in its SLDS, Kentucky Center for Statistics (KYSTATS), to align education and workforce and programs with evolving labor market demands through the Kentucky Future Skills Report, a tool that enables local leaders to conduct supply-demand analyses by incorporating typical outcomes data, such as wages and employment rates, alongside occupational projections and high-need industry trends.
- **Connect employers with local students participating in career and technical education programs of interest to the employer.** For instance, Indiana's Department of Workforce Development's Pivot tool is a workforce recommendation engine that integrates the SLDS data from education,

¹ US Department of Education. National Center for Education Statistics. Profile of State Data Capacity in 2019 and 2020: Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) Survey Descriptive Statistics.
<https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2022/2022051.pdf>

workforce, and unemployment insurance records to help jobseekers identify career paths that align with their unique skills and experiences.

- **Streamline admissions processes for eligible high school students to reverse major postsecondary enrollment declines.** The California State University System is facilitating an automated admissions initiative with California's college and career readiness platform, CaliforniaColleges.edu, to support transcript submission verification.
- **Provide a more complete picture of the value of postsecondary pathways so students and job seekers can make informed decisions about which education and career pathways are right for them and policymakers can identify which approaches work and which do not.** Minnesota's Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System (SLEDs) combines data from the Minnesota Office of Higher Education and the Department of Employment and Economic Development to produce the Graduate Employment Outcomes tool, which enables program evaluation and career planning through detailed insights into employment rates, wages, and industry sectors for graduates.

Modernizing state data systems to meet these needs requires robust data governance, privacy, and security. States are leading the way on implementing these foundational elements. But ongoing collaboration and support from federal partners is critical to ensuring that state data systems can be used in ways that most benefit students, workers, and families. Last Congress, both Chambers considered legislation with robust, thoughtful reforms that would help states adopt these components and modernize their systems in a manner that could better support students and their families. We encourage Congress to revisit those proposals in addition to its funding decisions.

I would be pleased to talk with you or your staff in more detail about this request. DQC's Vice President of Federal Policy Kate Tromble (kate@dataqualitycampaign.org) would be happy to facilitate a conversation.

Sincerely,

Advance CTE
All4Ed
Alliance for Learning Innovation
Credential Engine, Inc.
Data Foundation
Data Quality Campaign
FutureFit AI
Institute for Higher Education Policy
Knowledge Alliance
National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Council on Teacher Quality
New America Higher Education Program
New America's Open Technology Institute
Results for America
StriveTogether
The Education Trust
Third Way
UnidosUS