The Postsecondary Data Collaborative (PostsecData) and the Workforce Data Quality Campaign (WDQC), in cooperation with the undersigned organizations and individuals, applaud Senators Hatch (R-UT), Warren (D-MA), Cassidy (R-LA), and Whitehouse (D-RI) and Representatives Mitchell (R-MI), Polis (D-CO), Garrett (R-VA), Krishnamoorthi (D-IL), Stivers (R-OH), Panetta (D-CA), Dunn (R-FL), and Upton (R-MI) for championing transparency through their introduction of the College Transparency Act, which would create a secure, privacy-protected postsecondary data system. Supported by four members of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions and two members of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, this bipartisan bill would help students, policymakers, and institutions to make informed choices by providing better information about college access, success, costs, and outcomes.

The research is abundantly clear: Investing in a college education pays off. But while college is worth it on average, students, policymakers, and institutions 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:

- How many low-income, adult, transfer, and part-time students earn a postsecondary certificate or degree from a particular institution?
- How much do students borrow, and can they repay their loans?
- How long does it take students to complete college, on average?
- How many non-completers from a particular college never reenroll, and how many transfer to finish their degree at another institution?
- Do 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 burden.

The College Transparency Act would reform federal policy to create a secure, privacy-protected postsecondary data system that would:

- Empower all students to make more informed choices about where to spend their precious time and money,
- Only be used to help students,
- Protect student privacy and adhere to best practices in data security,
- Reduce reporting burden for colleges and universities by replacing the student components of the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS),

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• Better steward taxpayer dollars,
• Uncover equity gaps so colleges and universities can change policies and practices to better serve underrepresented students, and
• Align education with labor market demand and help employers identify programs that are effectively preparing students for the workforce.

The bill is laser-focused on protecting students’ privacy. It includes protections that limit data disclosures, prohibit the sale of data, penalize illegal data use, protect vulnerable students, prohibit use of the data for law enforcement, and safeguard personally identifiable information.

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. It builds upon previous bipartisan, bicameral efforts to strengthen national data systems through the Student Right to Know Before You Go Act. We urge policymakers to pass legislation to create a postsecondary data system that gives the right people the right information to make the best possible decisions about higher education.

AccessLex Institute
Achieve Atlanta
Achieving the Dream
Advance CTE
American Association of Community Colleges
American Educational Research Association
Asian & Pacific Islander American Scholarship Fund
Aspen Institute College Excellence Program
Association for Career and Technical Education
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
Association of Public Data Users
Atlanta Regional Workforce Development Board
Bottom Line
California EDGE Coalition
Campaign for College Opportunity
Center for American Progress
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Cobb Chamber of Commerce
College Now Greater Cleveland
Colorado Center on Law and Policy
Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta
Council for Adult and Experiential Learning
Dallas County Community College District
Data Quality Campaign
Democrats for Education Reform
Excelencia in Education
Five Star Development, Inc.
Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce
Georgia Association for Career and Technical Education
Georgia Department of Education
Global Resource Management, Inc. (GRMI)
Greater North Fulton Chamber of Commerce
Holder Construction Company
Indiana Institute for Working Families
Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP)
Knowledge Alliance
Learn4Life
Lehman College of The City University of New York
Louisiana State University
Mahoning Valley Manufacturers Coalition
MCCI Medical Group
Metro Atlanta Chamber
NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education
National Higher Education Benchmarking Institute
National Association for College Admission Counseling
National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators
National Council for Workforce Education
National Skills Coalition
New America
New Growth Group, LLC
New York Association of Training & Employment Professionals (NYATEP)
Nexus Research and Policy Center
Partners for a Competitive Workforce
Policy Matters Ohio
Postsecondary Analytics
Public Insight Corporation
Rebuilding America's Middle Class
Scholarship America
Skills2Compete Colorado
SkillWorks
Southwest Ohio Region Workforce Investment Board
Student Veterans of America
The Bell Policy Center
The Education Trust
The Institute for College Access & Success (TICAS)
Third Way
uAspire
UNCF
Veterans Education Success
Virginia Community College System
Workforce Data Quality Campaign
Workforce Solutions Group
WSP USA
Young Invincibles