



June 2020

Dear [Member of Congress]:

Educators and parents across the country have done heroic work to support their students during the COVID-19 pandemic. But many learners – especially students from the nation’s most vulnerable communities – are likely to fall far behind academically as the school year is disrupted. Overcoming the pandemic’s unprecedented impact on schools and students, and supporting states’ economic and workforce recoveries, will require careful strategic planning by state and local leaders that is guided by accurate and complete data. With a robust data infrastructure and research capacity, states and districts will be better equipped to address the significant expected student learning loss caused by the pandemic and better able to design the upcoming school year to meet student needs safely.

Congress can help states and localities meet their students’ immediate and longer-term needs by renewing the federal commitment to promoting effective education data use. Data Quality Campaign (DQC), together with the undersigned organizations, strongly urge you to meet this urgent emergency need by using the next pandemic emergency spending bill to:

- Provide funding for rapid data collection and use to help state and local education agencies and their research partners accurately evaluate learning loss and fully understand the pandemic’s broader impacts on students, school systems, and vulnerable communities;
- Provide funding for every state to complete vitally important efforts to connect agency data systems, so that stakeholders have access to comprehensive and usable information about students that covers early education to the workforce;
- Provide flexibility to grantees to use other federal education funding for user-friendly data dashboards and other data tools (e.g., early warning systems) and to provide data use and data privacy training for teachers, school leaders, and other decisionmakers;
- Encourage the Department of Education to issue guidance or an “FAQ” emphasizing the importance of providing continued data transparency for families – especially in light of the cancellation of state summative tests – and recommending effective data use strategies to inform instructional, administrative and policy decisions;
- Pass the College Transparency Act to ensure that policymakers, educators, students and families have access to high quality data about postsecondary pathways and outcomes.

Providing additional data systems support to states and school districts will help leaders serve all students during and after the pandemic by enabling them to identify what students need and help them on a path to success through education and into the workforce. Thank you for considering these recommendations. We are happy to continue talking to you about these and other ideas that can help states in their recovery efforts.

Sincerely,



Data Quality Campaign
Alliance for Excellent Education
Credential Engine
Institute for Higher Education Policy
National Association of State Boards of Education
New America's Education Policy Program
Results for America
The Consortium for School Networking
The Education Trust
The State Educational Technology Directors Association