

# Education and Workforce Data LEGISLATION REVIEW

## What Happened in 2025?

In 2025, state legislators across the country continued to advance policies that prioritize secure, timely data. Legislators from both sides of the aisle introduced and championed hundreds of bills aimed at ensuring that individuals—students, families, and workers—can access the secure, timely information they need as they navigate their unique journeys through education and the workforce. As changes continue at the federal level, state leaders must, now more than ever, ensure that they have robust data ecosystems.

From strengthening early childhood systems to supporting transitions between education and the workforce, these efforts are not only providing answers to questions but also building public trust in the value and security of this data.

This resource serves as a roadmap for policymakers and advocates eager to bring these ideas to their own states. As the federal and state policy environments evolve, the need for trustworthy, transparent data remains constant. State policymakers must continue to lead the way, ensuring that every individual has the information necessary to make informed decisions and chart their own path forward.





## People Need to Be Able to Trust That States Are Using Their Data Responsibly, Governing It with Transparency, and Keeping It Secure

People won't use data they don't trust. Trust in data is not automatic—it must be earned and maintained through thoughtful design choices and transparent policies. In 2025, several states took steps to establish clear and accountable governance structures; create meaningful opportunities to build trust; and enact strong, comprehensive privacy protections. Together, these elements lay the groundwork for systems that people can rely on to support their education and career goals.

### How did state leaders further people's trust in data?

#### Codifying Cross-Agency Data Governance

Legislators in **Kansas**, **Massachusetts**, and **Oklahoma** introduced legislation to establish or codify cross-agency data governance—the most important step toward building trustworthy, sustainable data systems. Clear governance establishes who has responsibility for how data is collected, protected, accessed, and used. Without it, systems lack coordination and transparency. By codifying cross-agency governance in law, states create the structure needed for agency leaders to make decisions together in the sunshine—protecting privacy, building public trust, and maximizing the impact of investments in data.

In similar efforts, state leaders in **Hawaii** and **New Mexico** are bringing together agency leaders and technical experts as they set goals, identify use cases, and designate privacy guardrails for their data systems. Both state legislatures passed measures to establish working groups to assess current data use and determine how to improve their early childhood through workforce (P–20W) data ecosystems in the future.

#### Strengthening Privacy Protections

State lawmakers took important steps to strengthen public trust in education and workforce data by advancing privacy protections that clarify how data can—and cannot—be used. These efforts underscore that privacy and access go hand in hand: strong, clear safeguards enable students, families, and educators to use data with confidence.

- In **California**, state leaders proposed new privacy protections to safeguard student data. The bill would ban the use of student information for commercial artificial intelligence training and extend privacy rights to postsecondary students under the state's existing framework.
- **Connecticut** policymakers introduced a measure to prevent the sale of student data by test preparation companies. The proposal aims to close a loophole that left minors' personal information vulnerable to commercial misuse.

### HOW CAN ADVOCATES AND STATE POLICYMAKERS BUILD TRUST?

- If a state does not have a robust statewide longitudinal data system (SLDS) governed by an independent cross-agency governing board, Data Quality Campaign's (DQC) Roadmap for Cross-Agency Data Governance is a great place to start. It outlines clear steps to help states build the structures needed to support secure, effective, and people-first data use.
- Ensuring data privacy and providing access are linked. DQC's Centering Privacy: Data Access and Data Protection Go Hand in Hand outlines four actions that state leaders can take to ensure that privacy is thoughtfully embedded in how data systems are built, maintained, and used.
- Data systems work best when designed to address the needs of the people they serve. To build effective systems, state leaders must prioritize the perspectives of students, families, and communities. DQC's The Consumer's Guide to Data highlights features that make data systems useful, trusted, and focused on meeting the needs of students, families, and communities.



## People Need Data to Make Decisions About What Comes After High School

Regardless of which pathway from high school into postsecondary education they choose, right now too many students cannot weigh all of their options side by side to decide what's right for them. In 2025, several states took meaningful steps to reduce barriers between high school and college—recognizing that students need earlier, clearer information about their options. Through implementing streamlined admissions processes and centralizing information, states are making understanding what's possible and taking the next step with confidence easier for students and their families.

### WHAT ARE STREAMLINED ADMISSIONS?

The term “streamlined admissions” covers a diverse array of innovative policies and practices to make understanding postsecondary options, deciding on education pathways, and applying easier for students. A variety of models fall under this umbrella, each with different mechanisms for using data to simplify and streamline some aspect of the admissions process. Examples include:

- Direct admissions, through which students are proactively notified that they have been *accepted* based on academic criteria;
- Informed admissions, through which students are notified that they are *assured admission* to at least one institution based on academic criteria but are still required to complete a traditional application process; and
- Invitational admissions, through which students are notified that they are *eligible* for admission and are encouraged to apply.

## How did state leaders use data to make the path from high school to postsecondary clearer and more connected?

### Enabling Direct Admissions and Seamless Enrollment

Students shouldn't have to navigate fragmented information sources to figure out which colleges they're eligible for or how much they might have to pay. Data sharing across agencies makes keeping all of that information in one place possible. Students are then able to access those answers, making their decisions about college feel more accessible and less overwhelming. These efforts reflect a people-first approach to state data systems: giving students and families the tools they need to compare options, understand outcomes, and move forward—all in one place.

- In **Arkansas**, state leaders created the Arkansas Direct Admissions Program. Establishing data sharing between high schools and the state higher education agency enables students to be proactively notified about informed admissions opportunities.
- In **Illinois**, lawmakers passed a law that will require school districts to share academic and contact data—such as grade point average, course history, and email addresses—with higher education agencies, provided that an eligible student or their guardian opts in. Similar to direct admissions programs in other states, this data sharing supports processes that proactively connect students to college opportunities.
- In **Oregon**, state leaders expanded the state's direct admissions program, which leverages new data sharing between institutions and the Department of Education, to include independent institutions, aiming to improve access and streamline the admissions process for students pursuing higher education.
- **Texas** legislators supported students' postsecondary planning and transitions through two initiatives. First, the state launched a direct admissions program and MyTexasFuture.org, a centralized platform with admissions, financial aid, and

return on investment (ROI) information to help students make informed choices. Second, a new law requires the Texas Education Agency to publicly publish de-identified student outcomes data—including postsecondary enrollment, credential completion, and employment—by high school and cohort. This new law requires districts to use this data to set and report progress on annual college, career, and military readiness goals, and it requires counselors to use local data to guide students and families.

#### *Honorable Mention*

- In **Washington**, policymakers introduced legislation that would have codified the Washington Guaranteed Admissions Program, which leverages data that is shared from schools and districts to participating public, four-year institutions so that colleges and universities can admit students before they complete an application for admission. Codification ensures that policies last beyond administrations and across shifting priorities—a best practice for education data legislation.

### BEYOND ADMISSIONS: IDENTIFYING AND SUPPORTING VULNERABLE STUDENTS

Access to education isn't enough if students experiencing homelessness, food insecurity, or other challenges are unable to stay enrolled in or complete a program. To address this issue, California policymakers introduced the Financial Assistance for Students Experiencing Homelessness Pilot Program, which would require the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) to enter into a data-sharing agreement with the California Department of Education for the purposes of identifying students who have experienced homelessness so that their postsecondary institutions can offer them additional support.

Policyholders also introduced legislation to expand access to CalFresh, the federally funded food assistance program, for college students. The law would require CSAC and the Department of Social Services to use the state's Grant Delivery System to identify potentially eligible students, which is a data-centered approach. It also would mandate interagency data-sharing agreements and require public colleges to contribute relevant data—streamlining eligibility determinations and enabling direct outreach to students with their consent.

### HOW CAN ADVOCATES AND STATE POLICYMAKERS SUPPORT STUDENT TRANSITIONS?

- States can use existing data to make college admissions more automatic, accessible, and equitable. DQC's *Using Data to Streamline College Admissions and Access* highlights how state leaders can reduce friction, expand opportunity, and increase enrollment by using data to proactively connect students with postsecondary pathways.
- States can connect education and workforce data to create tools and policies that support students from enrollment through graduation and into the labor market. DQC's *Powering Potential* shows how robust SLDSs enable leaders to improve access to postsecondary pathways, boost completion rates with targeted supports, and measure ROI through long-term outcomes like employment and earnings.



## People Need Information to Navigate Their Careers with Confidence

State data systems are essential to helping people understand how their education and training connects to job opportunities—and whether those opportunities align with their goals. At the same time, policymakers need access to outcomes data to evaluate whether education and training programs are delivering real value. In 2025, state leaders took action to close the gap between education and employment, using data to support informed choices, strengthen career pathways, and improve economic mobility.

### How did state leaders support job seekers and workers?

#### Aligning Education with Labor Market Needs

When states connect education and training data with labor market outcomes, individuals can pursue with confidence the credentials that lead to high-quality jobs—and policymakers can evaluate the ROI for workforce, postsecondary, and other credentialing programs.

- In **Georgia**, state leaders passed the Top State for Talent Act to better align education with workforce needs. The law requires the use of GAfutures and Georgia Match—two statewide tools—to provide individual college and career plans for students in 6th through 12th grades and help them explore in-demand careers and related postsecondary options.
- In **Indiana**, state leaders passed a law requiring the state Department of Education to evaluate and publish the ROI of different career pathways. The law requires the use of employment and wage data to assess the impact of career and technical education, stackable credentials, and work-based learning programs.
- In **Louisiana**, lawmakers enacted legislation to strengthen credential tracking in high schools. The law requires schools to collect secure student identifiers to link education and workforce outcomes while protecting privacy through aggregate reporting.

#### Linking Workforce Data

In 2025, **Hawaii** took important steps to modernize its data infrastructure by authorizing the integration of wage records and tax data, which are often housed in separate agencies, into its SLDS. These changes support more accurate tracking of outcomes, helping state legislators more confidently align education investments with labor market needs.

#### HOW CAN ADVOCATES AND STATE POLICYMAKERS SUPPORT JOB SEEKERS AND WORKERS?

Access to robust workforce data—especially accurate, timely wage data—is essential to understanding whether education and training programs lead to meaningful employment. DQC's *Enhancing Unemployment Insurance Wage Data* highlights how states can improve their data systems to better measure outcomes, support informed decisions, and advance economic opportunity.



## People Need Early Childhood Data Systems That Work for Families

Families with young children rely on many programs—like early education, home visiting, and social services—to support their children’s healthy development, but limited access to information makes navigating these systems and understanding what they’re eligible for hard for families. At the same time, early childhood providers face burdensome data reporting requirements that don’t support their work, and policymakers often lack the data they need to understand how people are using early childhood services, identify gaps, and invest resources where they’re most needed. In 2025, state leaders took steps to provide families and communities with more information on early child care and education options.

### How did state leaders advance early childhood data systems that work for families?

#### Consolidating Early Childhood Data Systems into a Single Comprehensive Platform

By coordinating and integrating data across agencies, states can provide families with clear information to access the services they need. These systems not only reduce burdens on families but also help state leaders identify gaps and target resources more effectively. Early childhood data must be a foundational part of how states support families from the start—not an afterthought.

- In **Illinois**, policymakers enacted a law that requires the state’s Department of Early Childhood to create an early childhood integrated data system (ECIDS), with the goal of creating “a simpler, better, and fairer system for all Illinois children and families.” In addition to integrating and sharing data, the law mandates the development of public analytic portals and query tools designed for families and communities to access aggregate data, putting the information directly into their hands as they navigate early childhood education and program decisions.
- In **Texas**, legislators passed a law that directs the state’s Early Childhood Interagency Workgroup to develop an ECIDS designed to provide data across agencies to enable state agency staff and policymakers to access the information they need to make informed decisions to support Texas’s early childhood needs, goals, and priorities. By consolidating existing early childhood data systems into a single, comprehensive platform, policymakers will be able to identify gaps in service, underserved populations, and opportunities to align programs and services.

#### Honorable Mentions

- In **Kansas** and **New York**, policymakers introduced proposals to better integrate early childhood data into statewide systems. While not enacted, these efforts signal attention to including early childhood in broader data modernization strategies—ensuring that programs and services are aligned to support young children and their families.

#### HOW CAN ADVOCATES AND STATE LEADERS ADVANCE EARLY CHILDHOOD DATA SYSTEMS THAT WORK FOR FAMILIES?

Families need reliable, timely information to make decisions about early care and learning—but today’s data systems are often disconnected and difficult to navigate. DQC’s *Transform State Early Childhood Data to Meet the Needs of Children, Families, and Those Who Support Them* outlines how leaders can build coordinated data systems that support family decisionmaking, improve service delivery, and inform better policies for young children.

## Conclusion: Legislating Toward a People-First Data System

Data is more than a technical asset; it is a tool that has the potential to answer people's questions as they navigate education and career pathways. Whether students are planning for college, job seekers are navigating career changes, or families are exploring early childhood programs, individuals need access to timely, secure, and meaningful information to make informed decisions.

State data systems must have people at the center, and this year's legislation shows promise. By establishing strong governance structures, enabling cross-agency data sharing, and finding innovative uses for linked data, state leaders are laying the foundation for systems that deliver clear benefits.

Going forward, state leaders and advocates can use this resource as a roadmap as they pursue investments in capacity building, privacy measures, and community engagement. As always, the legislation reviewed here is not the end; there is still plenty to do to move toward a future in which data systems are intentionally designed to meet people's needs and unlock opportunity across education and the workforce.

