



July 28, 2026

The Honorable Bill Cassidy, M.D.
Chairman
Senate Committee on Health, Education,
Labor, and Pensions (HELP)

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Health, Education,
Labor, and Pensions (HELP)

Re: College Transparency Act

Dear Chair Cassidy and Ranking Member Sanders:

On behalf of the nation's 1,016 community colleges, the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) thanks you for your leadership on the bipartisan, bicameral College Transparency Act (CTA, S. 2511), and urges its swift passage.

Community colleges have long advocated for more accurate, meaningful data on postsecondary outcomes, including post-completion earnings. Students and families need more accurate data to make informed choices about how to spend hard-earned money on the most effective programs that are right for them. Policymakers need better data to make informed decisions about policy and funding affecting student outcomes. Business leaders need better student outcome data so they can know where to locate, recruit, hire, and train workers – in the U.S., and not somewhere else.

The Problem: The federal government's annual Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) required under current law does not fully recognize community college students' transfer, completion, and employment outcomes. IPEDS only reports on student outcome data for first-time, full-time college students who begin in fall, which applies to only 12 percent of community college students. Further, current law prohibits the federal government from collecting student-level data and limits reporting to students participating in the federal financial aid programs. As a result, current data systems are duplicative, inefficient, and burdensome for colleges, while also failing to generate complete, accurate, and timely information about student progress and success.

The Solution: the College Transparency Act. The CTA will lift the existing ban and will create a secure, privacy-protected federal student-level data network (SLDN) within the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the Department of Education's (ED) statistical agency.

The new system will deliver a comprehensive picture of student outcomes across postsecondary education to inform students and families, institutions, employers, and policymakers. The bill has been endorsed by more than 150 organizations, representing colleges and universities, employers, workforce and community development groups, student advocacy groups, veterans, and civil rights advocates.

The CTA will:

- **Count all community college students.** Under current law, the required annual IPEDS data only include first-time, full-time students beginning in fall, and students receiving Title IV federal student aid – leaving out more than half of all community college students. The bill will fix this by counting all students, thereby

presenting a more complete picture of enrollment and success at community colleges.

- **Reward transfer as a measure of student success.** Transfer is a key goal of many community college students, but the current system fails to adequately account for transfer. The bill will capture transfers on a more comprehensive basis and thus better reflect student and institutional success.
- **Decrease reporting burdens and improving data quality for new accountability measures.** The College Transparency Act will allow the federal government to better leverage existing data sources at federal agencies and institutional data. By decreasing federal reporting requirements and eliminating the need for overlapping state, private, and institutional collection efforts, the bill will save community colleges time and money. CTA will greatly enhance the accuracy and fairness of the new Direct Loan accountability measures and Workforce Pell program.
- **Facilitate better alignment between program offerings and workforce demands.** Community colleges currently face enormous barriers to accessing information on how their graduates fare in the workforce. This has major implications for public policy as well as the colleges. The bill will provide complete, accurate, and timely information on post-college outcomes, including labor market outcomes and program- and institution-level earnings. Armed with this data, community colleges will be better equipped to refine program offerings, build relationships with employers, and strengthen local talent pipelines.
- **Showcase the value of community college programs.** Community college programs deliver strong outcomes for students from all academic and personal backgrounds. By counting all students, the bill will highlight the value of community college programs to prospective students, employers, and policymakers by better capturing success for community college students, improving data on employment and earnings outcomes, and disaggregating information by key student characteristics – such as Pell Grant receipt, age, and military status.

We thank you for your consideration and look forward to continuing to work with you to enact CTA.

Sincerely,



Jee Hang Lee
ACCT President and CEO

CC: Members of the Senate HELP Committee