



The Honorable Bill Cassidy, M.D.  
Chair, Senate Committee on Health,  
Education, Labor and Pensions

The Honorable Tim Walberg  
Chair, House Committee on Education &  
Workforce

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

The Honorable Robert C. “Bobby” Scott  
Ranking Member, House Committee on  
Education & Workforce

March 10, 2025

Dear Members of Congress,

Together, the 87 undersigned organizations and individuals, in partnership with the Postsecondary Data Collaborative (PostsecData), write to express our deep concern regarding recent federal actions that undermine critical information systems supporting American education. PostsecData is a nonpartisan coalition of education leaders, researchers, and advocates committed to using high-quality postsecondary data to improve success for all students. We urge Congress to demand transparency regarding abrupt contract cancellations and protect the integrity, privacy, and security of sensitive postsecondary student data.

### **Critical Threats to Our Nation’s Knowledge-Building Infrastructure**

The Institute of Education Sciences (IES), our primary public, national research and evaluation office, which oversees one of thirteen principal federal statistical agencies, is being gutted by the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE). This has not been transparently communicated to Congress or the public—DOGE has not provided information about what has been cut, what has been preserved, or what evidence and reasoning was used to make these cuts. These actions weaken our capacity to assess and improve educational and economic outcomes for students—directly jeopardizing our ability to build a globally competitive workforce. Further, the recent DOGE-led contract cancellations and pauses of grants overseeing education research and data collection appear to violate statutory directives of Congress, inconsistent with the lawful appropriation of funds.

Critical data collections, research, and evaluations used by federal and state policymakers to inform investments in our education system, prepare our future workforce, and provide educators with information on evidence-based interventions have ground to a halt. Without these insights, policymakers will soon be forced to make decisions in the dark, unable to steward taxpayer dollars efficiently. The harmful implications of IES cuts have serious consequences including:

- 1. Cancelling crucial studies and evaluations that assess the efficacy of major national investments in education and fulfill statutory requirements such as:**

- The National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS) and the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS), key data sources that track how students and families afford postsecondary education, students' experiences in college, and long-term workforce outcomes, including for Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. NPSAS fulfills [statutory reporting requirements](#).<sup>1</sup>
- The National Evaluation of Career and Technical Education under Perkins V (NECTEP), which informs policymakers on the effectiveness of CTE grants that support local school districts and college systems developing and delivering programs intended to prepare students for the workforce.
- The Condition of Education, an annual, Congressionally-mandated report that provides key indicators such as academic performance, college enrollment, educational attainment, labor force outcomes, and international comparisons.
- The What Works Clearinghouse, a vital resource summarizing high-quality education research studies which policymakers and education practitioners from early childhood through workforce development rely on to develop and implement evidence-based local and state programs.

**2. Eliminating critical support that ensures education data across all sectors are protected, understood, and disseminated, including:**

- Cancelling contracts that manage data sharing agreements and enable secure and appropriate access and use of sensitive information.
- Terminating contracts that support the maintenance of [DataLab](#), an online platform enabling users to easily explore, analyze, and visualize data across all education sectors.
- Cancelling contracts that maintain the Common Education Data Standards (CEDs), which power many Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) and ensure consistent and comparable data across education sectors.
- Eliminating technical assistance to support the Statistical Standards and Data Confidentiality Staff (SSDCS) on matters related to confidentiality and data security, increasing risks of unauthorized access and breaches.
- Halting analysis, interpretation, and dissemination of the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), the premier national study of both public and private schools that provides an annual snapshot of student achievement and access to K-12 and postsecondary pathways.

These cuts are significant and will have long-lasting effects across the education and workforce sectors. Strong evidence on effective educational practices can prepare our educators, students, and policymakers to adapt to evolving workforce needs, especially given rapid technological changes such as the development of generative AI. Now is not the time to cut critical investments in American education, research, and development if we are to remain competitive in the global marketplace.

<sup>1</sup> Higher Education Act of 1965, 20 U.S.C. § 1015a (2018), <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/20/1015a>.

Beyond the loss of critical insights, mid-project cancellations waste taxpayer dollars. With the cancellations, contractors will not complete already started work, meaning taxpayers will receive no benefit for the dollars already spent. Moreover, contractors may be required to destroy or return data they have collected or analyzed, erasing years of investment. And rebidding contracts in the future will mean spending even more money to duplicate work that has already been partially, if not mostly, completed. The federal investment in education research is a drop in the bucket compared to R&D investments in other critical sectors. The federal government doesn't have the resources to waste limited funds, and students don't have time to wait for existing efforts to be re-started.

### **Risks to the Integrity of Student Data and Systems**

Individual student data, particularly personally identifiable information (PII), and the systems they power, must be treated with the highest standard of integrity, privacy, and purpose. [Reports](#) indicate that DOGE staff accessed sensitive personal data from millions of federal student loan borrowers, including Social Security Number and income and asset information, raising serious privacy and security concerns.<sup>2</sup> Courts have temporarily [blocked](#) DOGE's ability to access sensitive student data housed at the Department of Education, including the Office of Federal Student Aid. However, [substantial questions remain](#) about the extent of the access and dissemination of that data prior to the court order. It is unclear who accessed students' PII data, for what purposes, whether redisclosures occurred, whether PII or other sensitive student data were used in conjunction with generative AI, and whether all relevant privacy and cybersecurity laws, standards, and best practices were and continue to be followed.<sup>3 4</sup>

Student data must be safeguarded through adherence to robust privacy laws, security best practices and standards, and clear governance structures that ensure data are used responsibly and ethically.<sup>5</sup> Private student and family data cannot be "resecured" if erroneously released publicly or analyzed by non-privacy protected methods. Data access should be granted based on clearly defined roles and responsibilities and only for legitimate purposes.

### **Swift Congressional Action is Needed**

Congress [has the authority](#) and responsibility to ensure federal agencies conduct statutorily mandated data collection, fulfill related reporting requirements, provide maximum transparency into spending changes, and abide by all data privacy laws, regulations, and best practices.<sup>6</sup>

We respectfully urge Congress to leverage all available oversight mechanisms to thoroughly review recent IES contract and grant cancellations and demand transparency regarding what was cancelled, why, and, if applicable, details about plans to rebid cancelled contracts. Additionally,

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<sup>2</sup> Blake, Jessica, "Federal Judge Gives DOGE Access to Education Department Data," *Inside Higher Education*, February 18, 2024, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/quick-takes/2025/02/18/federal-judge-gives-doge-access-education-data>

<sup>3</sup> Montague, Zach, "Federal Judge Bars Elon Musk's Team from Student Loan Databases," *The New York Times*, February 24, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/24/us/politics/elon-musk-doge-department-of-education-data-ban.html>

<sup>4</sup> American Federation of Teachers v. Bessent, No. 8:25-cv-00430-DLB (D. Md. Feb. 24, 2025),

<https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.mdd.576070/gov.uscourts.mdd.576070.38.0.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act (CIPSEA); Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA); Fair Information Practice Principles (FIPPS); Federal Information Security Modernization Act (FISMA); Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act (GLBA) Privacy Rule; National Institution of Standards and Technology (NIST); Privacy Act of 1974

<sup>6</sup> Garvey, Todd, and Sean M. Stiff, *Congress's Authority to Influence and Control Executive Branch Agencies*, R45442 (Congressional Research Service, March 30, 2023), <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R45442>.

Congress should maximize its use of oversight tools to demand transparency about how, why, and by whom sensitive student data are being accessed and used. We appreciate [recent inquiries seeking clarity](#) about the cancellations and urge Congress to assess the cost of these actions.<sup>7 8</sup>

Rigorous, independent data collection is vital to maintaining the integrity of our education system, national economic interests, and our world class knowledge-building infrastructure. Data should be used to serve students, guide policymakers, and inform the public, while protecting students' and families' privacy. Again, we ask that Congress exercise its oversight responsibility and ensure agency leaders are protecting the data and research infrastructure that is the backbone of evidence-driven policy solutions.

We stand ready to aid in these efforts.

If you have any questions about this statement, please contact Kelly Leon, Vice President of Communications and Government Affairs at the Institute for Higher Education Policy ([kleon@ihep.org](mailto:kleon@ihep.org)) or Taylor Myers, Assistant Director of Research and Policy ([tmyers@ihep.org](mailto:tmyers@ihep.org)).

Sincerely,

**Organizations:**

AACTE: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education  
Achieving the Dream  
Advance CTE  
American Association of Community Colleges  
American Association of University Women (AAUW)  
American Educational Research Association  
American Indian College Fund  
Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE)  
Association for the Study of Higher Education  
Calbright College  
Center for Democracy & Technology  
Center for Higher Education Policy and Practice at SNHU  
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)  
Center for Learner Equity  
Center for Studies in Higher Education  
Consortium of Social Science Associations  
Corporation for a Skilled Workforce  
Council for Opportunity in Education (COE)  
Council for the Study of Community Colleges  
Data Quality Campaign  
Digital Promise Global

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<sup>7</sup> U.S. House Committee on Education and the Workforce, "Bicameral Oversight Letter to ED re: DOGE Cuts to Important Education Research," February 21, 2025. [https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/bicameral\\_oversight\\_letter\\_to\\_ed\\_re\\_doge\\_cuts\\_to\\_important\\_education\\_research.pdf](https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/bicameral_oversight_letter_to_ed_re_doge_cuts_to_important_education_research.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> U.S. House Committee on Education and the Workforce, "Department of Education CIO Oversight Letter," February 21, 2025. [https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/department\\_of\\_education\\_cio\\_oversight\\_letter.pdf](https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/department_of_education_cio_oversight_letter.pdf)

EDGE Consulting Partners  
EdTrust  
Equity Accelerator  
Excelencia in Education  
Generation Hope  
Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce  
Higher Learning Commission  
InformEd States  
InnovateEDU  
InsideTrack  
Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP)  
Middle States Commission on Higher Education  
National Association for College Admission Counseling  
National Center for Learning Disabilities  
National College Attainment Network  
National Council on Measurement in Education  
NCHEMS  
New America Higher Education Program  
New America's Open Technology Institute  
New England Commission of Higher Education  
PlayWell, LLC  
Postsecondary Equity & Economics Research (PEER) Center  
Public Interest Privacy Center  
SACSCOC  
Salish Kootenai College  
Samara Consulting, LLC  
Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD)  
State Higher Education Executive Officers Association  
Student Basic Needs Coalition  
The Aspen Institute College Excellence Program  
The Campaign for College Opportunity  
The Century Foundation Higher Education Policy Team  
The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs  
The Institute for College Access & Success  
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights  
The Study Group  
Third Way  
Trellis Foundation  
Veterans Education Success  
WASC Senior College and University Commission  
Young Invincibles

### **Individuals**

Amanda R. Tachine, Professor, University of Oregon  
Anna Haskins, Associate Professor, University of Notre Dame  
Anne-Marie Nunez, Executive Director of Diana Natalicio Institute for Hispanic Student  
Success, The University of Texas at El Paso  
Chardé Reid, Professor, William & Mary

Christina Aushana, Postdoctoral Fellow, University of Toronto  
Denisa Gándara, Associate Professor, The University of Texas at Austin  
Denise Bartell, Senior Associate Vice President, Regional System Faculty & Student Success,  
Kent State University  
Dominique Baker, Associate Professor of Education and Public Policy, University of Delaware  
Donald Heller, Independent Higher Ed Consultant  
Dustin Thoman, Professor, San Diego State University  
Fenaba Addo, Associate Professor, UNC-Chapel Hill  
Jeffrey Sun, Associate Dean and Professor, University of Louisville  
Jennifer M. Gómez, Boston University, Assistant Professor  
Jordan Matsudaira, Professor of Economics and Public Policy, American University  
Judith Scott-Clayton, Professor of Economics & Education, Teachers College, Columbia  
University  
Kate McPhee, Consultant/Researcher, American Institutes for Research  
Lauren Schudde, Associate professor, Educational Leadership & Policy, University of Texas,  
Austin  
Mildred Boveda, Associate Professor, Pennsylvania State University  
Mimi Recker, Professor, Utah State University  
Otto Santa Ana, Professor Emeritus, UCLA  
Sara Bombaci, Assistant Professor, Colorado State University  
Sasha Diaz, Ford Fellow, PhD Student, University of Chicago  
Stephanie Cellini, Professor of Public Policy and Economics, George Washington University  
Susan Dynarski, Professor, Harvard University  
Terrell Morton, Assistant Professor, University of Illinois Chicago

CC:

The Honorable Susan Collins  
Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Vice Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Chair, House Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Member, House Committee on Appropriations