

Senator Bye, Representative Willis and distinguished members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, the Data Quality Campaign (DQC) appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony regarding Senate Bill 237, *An Act Concerning the Sharing of Information Between the Labor Department and Institutions of Higher Education*. DQC applauds the legislation proposed by the Connecticut legislature to permit the sharing of wage and employment data with institutions of higher education to improve higher education programs and student outcomes. The majority of states are exploring ways to leverage their state data systems to improve higher education and workforce programs' effectiveness in ensuring positive student outcomes. Passage of this bill would position Connecticut to make continued progress and be competitive for federal funding (the Department of Labor recently announced new applications for Workforce Data Quality Initiative grants).

Permitting the Labor Department to share wage and employment data with institutions of higher education for purposes of program evaluation marks a step in the right direction. In 2011, 26 states reported to DQC that they connect higher education data with wage and employment data. DQC strongly encourages the legislature to address the following issues to strengthen the positive impact of the proposed legislation:

- 1) Cross-agency data sharing requires shared purpose and ongoing management and as such demands a body that can be tasked with and held accountable for decision making.
 - a. This proposed bill permits the sharing of data between Labor and higher education and includes necessary provisions for privacy, security and confidentiality of data. However, without laying out the expectation that this data sharing will happen, one or both parties may prove reluctant to participate. Furthermore, establishing a cross-agency governance body helps to create a culture of shared responsibility, promotes transparency for the good of those in the system rather than gatekeeping for the protection of each agency's interests, and ensures that data sharing remains policy-driven. Finally, the comprehensive processes that sharing data involves require a body with the authority to make the necessary decisions and manage the cross-agency relationships over time.
 - i. *Recommendation: Establish a P-20W data governance body with the authority to make the necessary decisions to ensure data quality and appropriate data sharing. This group should be comprised of agency heads and senior leaders focused on strategic priorities. This high-level policymaker group must then ensure that the appropriate resources are dedicated to implementing the vision they set.*
 - ii. See Maryland's SB 275 (<http://dataqualitycampaign.org/resources/details/1237>) for an example of establishing cross-agency governance.
- 2) Further clarify the purposes of linking higher education and workforce data.
 - a. Sharing data for the effective administration and evaluation of programs is a necessary but insufficient statement of purpose. Sharing higher education and workforce data can provide vital information to multiple stakeholders for improved decision making and policy making. Detailing the questions that various stakeholders need to answer will aid in setting boundaries for data sharing, thus mitigating privacy, security, and confidentiality concerns; building buy-in among participating agencies and institutions; and providing focus for the development of data linkages. Prioritizing the policy and research questions, and establishing a process for updating these questions regularly, will ensure that data systems and sharing processes are developed in a manner that meets immediate needs while also including flexibility to account for evolving information needs over time.
 - i. *Recommendation: Lay out the questions that the legislature and other stakeholders seek to answer with shared data OR task the aforementioned P-20W data governance body with developing a cross-agency consensus around the priority policy and research questions.*
 1. Examples of questions that can be answered with linked higher education and workforce data include:
 - a. How do students' course-taking patterns correlate to students' employment and earnings patterns?