



MASS WORKFORCE ASSOCIATION
ONE SYSTEM – ONE VOICE

October 30, 2023

Senator Jason Lewis, Chair
Joint Committee on Education
Massachusetts State House, Room 511-B
Boston, MA, 02133

Representative Denise Garlick, Chair
Joint Committee on Education
Massachusetts State House, Room 473G
Boston, MA, 02133

Dear Chair Lewis, Chair Garlick and Members of the Committee:

I am writing in support of H.530, *An Act establishing an education to career data center*, filed by Representatives Lipper-Garabedian and Cruz; and S.343, *An Act establishing an education to career data center*, filed by Senator Payano.

The Massachusetts Workforce Association (MWA) is a statewide membership association that leads, advocates, and convenes on behalf of the state’s workforce development system. MWA provides a unified voice for the state’s regionally-led workforce development system to ensure it is responsive to the dynamic demands of businesses, job seekers, incumbent workers, and youth throughout the Commonwealth.

As Massachusetts makes unprecedented investments in education and workforce development to close equity gaps and respond to an intense worker shortage, the demand for high-quality data that informs policy decisions is acute. States around the country are crafting governance legislation to get the most from their education-to-career data systems while also maintaining privacy. Sometimes called state longitudinal data systems (SLDS) or “P20W systems,” these highly protected and secure technology systems connect non-identifiable state data from the journey starting at pre-K through postsecondary and workforce. Drawing on the expertise of the national Data Quality Campaign and the experience of forerunners like [Kentucky and Maryland](#), this legislation will make Massachusetts a national leader. Policymakers, researchers, students and families, and jobseekers will gain access to meaningful information resulting from the connection of this education-to-career data that will allow them to make more well-informed decisions.

This bill:

- Establishes a mission and vision for a centralized education-to-career data system that uses non-identifiable data to better understand the journeys from early education to K-12, higher education, and into the workforce;
- Provides a legal framework for cross-agency data sharing by creating an office and governing board to oversee the use of these data and safeguard information to protect individual privacy;
- Allows for evaluation of the impact of state investments in education, workforce development, and training; and
- Develops protocols for evaluating strategic initiatives and exchanging state data with local research-practice partnerships in a manner that protects privacy.

MWA believes strongly that it is a matter of government accountability and transparency that Massachusetts continue developing and supporting an SLDS that makes use of the latest and best technology, protects individual privacy, and enables policymakers, state agencies, and other key stakeholders to effectively manage, measure, and evaluate programs, performance, and outcomes. Too many of our state agencies have antiquated data systems or systems that reinforce siloes within the state's bureaucracy. Many of the same individuals are being served across multiple Secretariats and Departments within Labor and Workforce Development, Housing and Livable Communities, Education, Health and Human Services, and Public Safety and Security. We should be able to know if our state's investments are making the positive difference we intend them to make, using the latest technology and best practices to preserve privacy.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has made enormous strides in the past several years with a federal SLDS grant to develop the [Education 2 Career Data Hub](#). This grant funding ends in February 2025. Additionally, during the Baker Administration, six state agencies developed a data use license agreement to support an effort called Learn to Earn, which allowed them to share data in order to assess whether public assistance programs were inadvertently discouraging participants from engaging in training and work because of the benefit cliff impact of doing so. This agreement was unprecedented and led to real changes to support individuals and mitigate cliff effects. Without this legislation, the progress made thus far could be lost as Administrations and their budget and policy priorities change.

As the Commonwealth continues to invest hundreds of millions in pre-K, K-12, postsecondary and workforce development programs, it is imperative that we codify the data integration that has been accomplished so far and build a best-in-class education and workforce policy and program evaluation system. An education to career data system such as this, with a transparent governance structure that prioritizes data privacy and protection, will be better able to evaluate the progress state investments are making in closing equity gaps, and help leaders make the necessary changes to ensure they do so.

We hope to work with the committee on ways to build a robust state longitudinal data system that will benefit students, families, workers, and employers alike. As such, we respectfully

request your support of H.530 and S.343. Should you need any more information please do not hesitate to reach out to me either by phone: 617-872-4127, or e-mail: rvaisanen@massworkforce.com. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Raija Vaisanen". The signature is written in a cursive style and is set against a light gray rectangular background.

Raija Vaisanen
Executive Director
Massachusetts Workforce Association

Cc: Senate President Karen Spilka
Speaker of the House Ronald Mariano