

Organizational Sign-on letter in opposition to the College Transparency Act

If your organization is willing to sign onto this letter, please do so by [adding your name ASAP on the form here](#).

Dear Senator / Representative:

We write to urge you to oppose the passage of the College Transparency Act (CTA) which was approved by the Senate HELP committee on July 30. This bill would overturn the long-time prohibition against the federal government collecting personally identifiable student information and instead would authorize the creation of a new federal database to track all students enrolled in a higher education institution throughout their entire lives.

As currently drafted, the CTA would enable the federal government to create a surveillance system that would collect the personal information of every college student and then aggregate their data with personal information collected by other federal agencies over their lives and careers. The individuals tracked would have no opportunity to preserve their privacy by either opting in or out of this data collection. Nor could they ask to have their personal information deleted, ever.

The CTA would allow the US Department of Education to collect the personal information directly from colleges and universities for each of their full-time and part-time students, including their enrollment status, attendance, age, gender, and race. This personal data would then be matched to information held by other federal agencies after these students leave college, through data sharing agreements with the Department of Defense, the Veterans Administration, the Census Bureau, the Social Security Administration, the Office of Federal Student Aid, and potentially other agencies added over time as well.

Nearly any other personal information could be added to this data system, or “enhanced” according to the wording of the bill, if thought “necessary to ensure that the postsecondary data system fulfills [its] purposes,” although those purposes are not clearly defined.

Whatever guardrails to protect student privacy and anonymity in the current bill could easily be weakened over time, or violated, with the data used to target current and former

students simply because they are members of a disfavored racial, ethnic, religious, or other vulnerable group.

The benefits of such a system in terms of promoting accountability for higher education would be far overshadowed by the invasive and ongoing nature of this proposed database.

Although the CTA's supporters maintain that creating this massive federal system holds value for prospective students, history shows clearly how this sort of data collection has been used to target and violate the civil rights of our most vulnerable and marginalized communities..

In short, any effort to create lifelong dossiers on all students of America's postsecondary educational institutions is dangerous and ill-advised. As parents, education, and privacy advocates, we implore you to oppose this bill.

The goal of protecting students' financial interests, although important, should never be advanced by placing their most fundamental rights at risk.

Yours sincerely,

Parent Coalition for Student Privacy

Submitted on behalf of the following organizations:

Alliance for Quality Education

Class Size Matters

Consumer Federation of America

Education Law Center

Electronic Privacy Information Center (epic.org)

Network for Public Education

Parents for AI Caution in Educational Spaces

[\[add the name of your organization on the form here.\]](#)