Dear Chairwoman Murray, Ranking Member Burr, Chairman Scott, and Ranking Member Foxx:

Communities across the country are overwhelmed by many challenges exacerbated by the pandemic, and are trying to navigate these challenges with insufficient information. States and districts are in urgent need of federal support to update their data infrastructures and build the capacity to more effectively use data to support their communities. **The Data Quality Campaign (DQC) and the undersigned organizations strongly urge you to provide $350 million in targeted funding to modernize state and local data systems so state and district leaders can address current and evolving information needs.**

During the Great Recession of 2008, federal and state leaders faced an educational and economic crisis of similar proportions. At that time, Congress responded by making data systems an anchor investment in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act's (ARRA) education strategy. That emergency investment provided states, on average, $12.5 million each, which had an immediate and long-term impact on the state's ability to serve students and aid in planning and economic recovery. Now, these state data systems are too outdated to handle the new demands of the current crisis: addressing learning recovery, rebuilding state economies, and spending limited resources wisely.

President Biden has signed a number of executive orders, including the recent [Executive Order on Supporting the Reopening and Continuing Operation of Schools and Early Childhood Education Providers](#), signaling that the country cannot recover from the pandemic without better data. The new federal data collection requirements enumerated in these orders are an important first step, but must go further. It will take years to measure the full impact of the pandemic, and it would be shortsighted not to take the opportunity now to provide states with the resources they need to modernize these systems. A robust federal investment will provide state and local leaders with critical information, including data on individual student groups, to respond to evolving policy challenges and chart an equitable path forward. Just as importantly, modernized state data infrastructures will provide individuals with the tools necessary to make informed choices as they navigate education and career plans that have been significantly disrupted due to the pandemic.

Congress must move quickly to ensure that every state has emergency supplemental resources to improve state and local data systems, and increase the human capacity needed to turn this data into actionable information. These efforts will not only ensure that the Biden Administration's vision for economic and educational recovery can be successful, but also will provide states with the short- and long-term support they need. By appropriating $350 million, Congress can ensure that states receive funds similar to the scope of ARRA while accounting for the increased need to improve local systems and to modernize and connect systems from other sectors. Specifically, we urge Congress to appropriate $350 million for U.S. Department of Education to administer in the following manner:

- Allocate 30 percent to provide **every state with funds** to address immediate needs, including upgrading systems and making data collection adjustments to respond to new data requirements from the federal government, inform learning recovery, and providing support to districts and schools. These funds should be allocated through the Governor's Education Emergency Relief Fund or another comparably

flexible funding stream that ensures close collaboration between state education agencies and other state agencies.

- Allocate 70 percent to authorize an **emergency round of competitive grants** for large-scale data projects. These funds could be used for activities such as:
    - Modernizing outdated data source systems (e.g., K–12, career and technical education, teacher preparation, postsecondary, workforce, health and human services).
    - Improving credential transparency and connecting it to the broader state data infrastructure.
    - Connecting data systems so they can be used to provide insights to address complex policy challenges, inside and outside of education (e.g., building longitudinal data systems that connect data from Pre-K through career, integrating education and foster care systems to understand the full needs of students).
    - Improving state to district data linkages.
    - Providing funds directly to districts to use for modernizing their data systems and tools.
    - Ensuring that privacy and security protections are up to date and implemented with fidelity so that they safeguard data while enabling use.
    - Investing in the capacity of staff to manage and use the data (e.g., training existing staff, providing data support through technical assistance centers, hiring new staff with data-specific skillsets).

We encourage you to think beyond using the state longitudinal data system (SLDS) program for these competitive grants, so they can be used more flexibly across sectors to address different needs in different states. Funds could be allocated directly to governor's offices to more easily be allocated across agencies.

We respectfully urge Congress to take these steps now so that every state and community is equipped with the data needed to help students, education systems, and communities recover quickly from the pandemic. We look forward to working with you and your colleagues in the 117th Congress to make this vision for our nation's recovery a success.

Sincerely,

Data Quality Campaign
Advance CTE
Aligned
America Succeeds
American Educational Research Association
Chiefs for Change
Credential Engine
Data Coalition
EdAllies
EDGE Consulting Partners
Education Policy Program at New America
Education Reform Now
Great MN Schools
Institute for Higher Education Policy
Learning Heroes

National Association of State Boards of Education
National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Council on Teacher Quality
National PTA
National Skills Coalition
National Urban League
Results for America
Stanford University (Hoover Institution)
State Higher Education Executive Officers Association
Southern Regional Education Board
The Education Trust

cc. Labor H Subcommittees