



Senate Education Committee

Connie Leyva, Chair

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Sacramento, California

Senate Bill 2, Statewide Longitudinal Student Database

Testimony of Ria Sengupta Bhatt

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Good afternoon, Chair Leyva and members of the Committee. Thank you very much for having me. My name is Ria Sengupta Bhatt, and I am the Interim Executive Director for California Competes: Higher Education for a Strong Economy. We are an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit project that focuses on making both the economic and equity-driven case for increasing postsecondary certificate and degree attainment in California.

I am here today in support of Senate Bill 2, introduced by Senators Glazer and Allen, which would convene a review committee to advise on the establishment a Statewide Longitudinal Student Database. Today, the need to improve educational opportunities and outcomes has never been more urgent. The demand for a highly skilled workforce grows, while most Californians struggle with burgeoning income inequality. A myriad of options lay before policymakers to better serve students and families, but California's decisionmakers are acting in an information vacuum. The state has a very limited ability to diagnose its challenges in education, invest wisely in solutions, and then comprehensively assess the impacts of those investments. Without a fully integrated, top to bottom data infrastructure, California's leaders lack the information they need to best serve students, workers, and the economy.

We support SB 2 because systematically integrating data from preschool to workforce is a key step for California to modernize the education sector. This bill is essential because for some Californians, the path from education to employment is a direct line from high school to college to a job. But for most, the path is not that simple. The lack of comprehensive data prevents

policymakers from pinpointing where Californians fall through the cracks of the education-to-employment pipeline; how that varies by race, gender, region, and income; and most importantly, why it happens.

It is mind-boggling that our state cannot answer seemingly fundamental questions like, “In a given year, how many California high school graduates enrolled in college the next fall?” because the K-12 and college data systems do not fully talk to one another. SB 2 takes the necessary step of tasking a committee to identify ways to answer this and many other essential questions about Californians’ experiences and develop a streamlined plan for collecting, measuring, and reporting individual-level metrics in one place.

The California Department of Education (CDE), the California Community Colleges (CCC), the California State University (CSU), the University of California (UC), the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC), as well as the Employment Development Department (EDD) each independently hold rich data, but this segmented approach limits understanding of how the education and workforce systems complement one another. SB 2 creates an infrastructure to make these data actionable for the purposes of improving outcomes and reducing disparities. It carefully thinks through the inclusion and appropriate roles of key stakeholders—the segments, social services, workforce development, and student associations. It also addresses issues that often arise in conversations about data such as privacy and public access.

It is an exciting time to consider the potential for a P-Workforce data system. The need for a longitudinal, cross-sector system is real and immediate because these data should be the bedrock of all substantive, evidence-based policymaking. For California, progress in this area is long overdue. Thank you for your time and attention to this critical issue, and we respectfully ask for an AYE vote.