

To: SLDS Governing Board

From: Teach Plus Mississippi, Mississippi First, and The Children's Foundation of Mississippi

Subject: Joint Public Comment on Proposed Rules and Regulations Changes

Date: April 7, 2026

A Shared Vision for a Data-Informed Mississippi

Our coalition writes to express our strong support for the proposed changes to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) Governing Board's Rules and Regulations. We believe these updates represent a critical step toward creating a central repository that effectively connects data from early childhood through the workforce.

By modernizing these procedures, the Board is laying the groundwork to better assess the impact of educational programs, policies, and supports on student outcomes, enabling more informed, data-driven decision-making.

Aligned Priorities

The proposed changes offer a significant opportunity to build a more actionable and transparent data system. We specifically applaud the following:

- + **Codification of Data Sharing Agreements:** Removing the need to establish separate interagency agreements for every request will drastically reduce administrative friction.
- + **Establishment of the Multi-Agency Data Governance Committee (MADGC):** This body will provide oversight and ensure consistent operating procedures across agencies.
- + **Establishment of the Stakeholder & Researcher Advisory Committee (SRAC):** Providing a formal channel for educators, policy experts, and the public to guide the questions the data system seeks to answer is essential for usability.
- + **Commitment to Transparency:** Requiring a concise methodology and a detailed appendix for every report published through the SLDS will build public trust and provide context for data interpretation.

Areas for Refinement

To ensure these recommendations are implemented with fidelity and produce substantive improvements, our coalition urges the Governing Board to commit to the following refinements:

1. Prioritizing Early Childhood Education (ECE) Data

Currently, ECE data has been absent from the SLDS for nearly a decade. We recommend that the Board explicitly prioritize the **re-inclusion of early childhood education data** as a primary goal. A longitudinal system cannot be truly "cradle-to-career" if the "cradle" component is missing.

2. Clarifying the Governance Hierarchy

To avoid overlap and ensure high-level accountability, the Board should prioritize clarity in the governance hierarchy. We suggest the following distinctions:

- + **Governing Board:** Should consist of high-level agency leadership (e.g., the State Superintendent) to provide vision and executive authority.
- + **MADGC:** Should be composed of IT and data security leadership to manage technical "kit components" and interagency operations.
- + **SRAC:** Should include policy organizations, educators, and community members to provide feedback on the usefulness and usability of SLDS reports.

3. Strengthening Accountability & Access

To enhance the system's integrity and transparency, we propose several refinements aimed at strengthening accountability and streamlining data access across all participating agencies:

- + **Clarify Data Users:** Establish clear definitions around who is able to access SLDS data and create a communication plan to ensure consistent application across agencies.
- + **Prevent "Data Blocking":** Require any agency rejecting a data-sharing request to provide a valid, public reason for the rejection.
- + **Ensure Honest Input:** Establish rules that ensure students and teachers serving on advisory bodies do not hail from the same district, creating a necessary degree of separation for candid feedback.

A Request for Continued Partnership

While we do not propose a strict statutory timeline, **Teach Plus Mississippi, Mississippi First, and The Children's Foundation of Mississippi** would like to formally request to participate in the implementation process.

Our coalition members possess the technical and policy expertise necessary to help the Board navigate these transitions, and we look forward to working alongside you to ensure Mississippi's data system serves every student and educator in the state.

Organization Contacts

Sanford Johnson, Executive Director, Teach Plus Mississippi

sjohnson@teachplus.org

Angela Bass, Executive Director, Mississippi First

angela@mississippifirst.org

Ashley Parker Sheils, Executive Director, Children's Foundation of Mississippi

ashley@childrensfoundationms.org