

**edtrust**

# Can't Be Erased

## *Uplifting Our Diversity, Protecting Our History*

**Denise Forte**President & CEO [in @Denise\\_EdTrust](#)

***“History teaches that grave threats to liberty often come in times of urgency when constitutional rights seem too extravagant to endure.”***

— Thurgood Marshall

As we begin 2025, we find ourselves at an inflection point in our nation's history. Recent executive orders and legislative actions have dismantled federal diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts, as many states continue to eliminate DEI at scale, restrict discussions of race and identity in classrooms, ban books that tell the stories of communities of color and eliminate websites and datasets that exist to serve every American. These decisions do not just threaten progress — they attempt to erase the truth itself. But history and people cannot be erased, and neither can our

resolve. At EdTrust, we know that Black history is American history, Latino history is American history — and our commitment to telling the full, unvarnished truth remains unwavering.

Through our advocacy work at the federal, state, and local levels, along with our award-winning **#CantBeErased** campaign, we are pushing back against these efforts with urgency and purpose. We are advocating for policies and actions that ensure every student in this nation has access to a high-quality, competitive education — free from bigotry. The fight for education equity is urgent. And though the opposition is mighty and unyielding, so too is our determination. We will continue to stand alongside educators, students, and communities to ensure that America lives up to its founding pledge... *with liberty and justice for all.*

### ***Finishing the Year Strong***

As we wrapped up 2024, EdTrust steadfastly advocated for an improved education system, in which students achieve excellence and are allowed to realize their full potential. With full determination that our students will receive an excellent education from a diverse

### ***Impact & Wins***

#### **The Creating a More Positive University Space (CAMPUS) Act**

was introduced in the House in December by Rep. Summer Lee, with whom we worked for over a year. Heavily influenced by our 2023 [Campus Racial Climate Report](#), this bill seeks to improve the racial climate on college campuses using an annual national student survey in which the responses are disaggregated and publicly shared, among other changes, to ensure transparency and accountability.

#### **EdTrust successfully helped the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence**

stop school vouchers in Kentucky in November. Together with our partners, we defeated [Amendment 2](#), which would have amended the state's constitution to allow public dollars to flow to private schools. Amendment 2 was rejected in every county in Kentucky by a wide margin, halting the prospect of a future school voucher program in the state.

teacher workforce, we released a [Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program 50-State Scan](#) about a relatively new form of teacher preparation, as well as a report on [through-year assessments](#), an innovative approach to testing students at shorter intervals throughout the school year. On the higher education front, we looked at [short-term credentials](#), a surging trend, and whether they are worth the cost of attendance.

### *Uplifting Student Voice*

Students of color, students with disabilities, and the intersection of the two have been topics of exploration at EdTrust for the past year. With contributions from our [Graduate Student Advisory Council](#), we ran a [blog series](#) about the myriad barriers and opportunities for students of color with disabilities. We also published a [Q&A](#) with Jose Gonzales, a first-gen student who began his higher-ed journey at a community college and successfully transferred to Rice University.

EdTrust in Texas' [Community College Student Advisory Council](#) members shared their higher-ed perspectives with state leaders at a recent conference in Austin. And a former EdTrust intern and teacher makes a case for integrating the [arts into restorative justice programs](#). We will continue to tell the stories of people on the ground that spotlight the power of education.

### *Stepping Into the Moment*

I first arrived at EdTrust in 2019, during the first Trump administration. Now, as I celebrate my second anniversary as president and CEO, we are facing an even more daunting landscape — one in which the hard-fought progress toward educational equity is under attack. But if history has taught us anything, it's that progress does not come easily; it must be fought for. That's why we remain steadfast in our mission to ensure that every student — no matter their background, identity, race, or zip code — has access to a high-quality education that prepares them to succeed.

Public education is the foundation of our democracy, and we cannot allow it to be undermined by policies that seek to exclude, silence, or erase the very students we serve. Every child deserves to learn in a safe, inclusive, and affirming environment that nurtures their academic, social, and emotional growth. And higher education must remain accessible, affordable, and accountable in helping students earn degrees that open doors to economic mobility. I believe that through collective action and unwavering advocacy, we can build an education system that empowers every student to shape their own future. But we cannot wait — we must act with urgency, purpose, and resolve.

### *Let's get to work!*

With fortitude,



## *Impact & Wins*

### **The Massachusetts Legislature passed the [Educator Diversity Act \(EDA\)](#)**

in January. This is a landmark piece of legislation that will transform how educators of color are recruited and retained across the state. EdTrust in MA was a key force behind this bill — testifying at hearings, holding briefings, and mobilizing partners to amplify our advocacy efforts and research.

## **Coalition Work**

The December 2024 New England State Policy Summit, co-convened by the One Million Teachers of Color (1MTOC) campaign, brought state legislators from New England and Pennsylvania, state education agency (SEA) leaders, and educators together to address educator workforce diversity. The summit focused on policy levers, collaboration, and action plans to enhance diversity. EdTrust led a breakout session highlighting the [50-State Scan of Teacher Apprenticeship Programs](#). In this session, participants assessed diversity metrics and explored best practices.



## On the Hill

After the November election, EdTrust quickly jumped into action to educate federal partners, Hill staff, our state offices, other stakeholders, educators, students, and families on what is to come. Over the past few months, we and P-12 partners from the Rapid Response Desk coalition held various webinars to help stakeholders prepare. These included a webinar outlining the public education impact of the first Trump administration and what is to come in the second, which reached hundreds of partners before January; another webinar in January updating new Hill staff on recent developments; and a webinar on how the reconciliation process works and how a new reconciliation bill could undermine public education in 2025. Ever since the inauguration and the subsequent rash of executive orders from President Trump, we have been in rapid response mode.

We educated the public on the [dangers of the next administration's education policies](#). We issued statements against the [federal assistance freeze](#), the [halt](#)

[on research contracts, giving public dollars to private schools](#), and [attacks on women and girls](#). We explained [why we need the Department of Education](#), what losing it would mean for [students with disabilities, Black and Latino students, students from low-income backgrounds, and multilingual learners](#), and why [students must learn about the multicultural world in which they live](#).

Most importantly, last week, EdTrust and our coalition partners [urged the Senate to vote no on the confirmation of Linda McMahon](#), noting that [a vote for McMahon is a vote for Project 2025](#).

We also hosted a webinar showing how the maintenance of equity provisions in the American Rescue Plan resulted in \$900 million being allocated for the most vulnerable students in America.

Lastly, we are meeting with hundreds of organizations and policymakers to share messaging and advocacy opportunities — because we cannot do this work alone.

## IN THE MEDIA

- [Can Trump Ax the Education Department Without Congress?](#) (EdWeek)
- [What Might Happen if the Education Department Were Closed](#) (Hechinger Report)
- [6 Leaders Pushing for Fair Education](#) (Word in Black)
- [Are Short-Term Credentials Really More Affordable?](#) (Inside Higher Ed)
- [Biden's education grades: F on FAFSA, an incomplete on student loan forgiveness?](#) (NPR)

## ON THE BLOG

- [Truly Honoring Dr. King](#)
- [The Real Consequences of the Next Administration's Education Policies](#)
- [How Project 2025 Would Impact LGBTQ+ Students and Faculty](#)

## EdTrust-West

EdTrust-West is proud to announce the #TeachersWeNeed campaign! California is home to a diverse student population —something we're immensely proud of. However, the number of teachers of color and multilingual teachers across the state has been low for too many years. If we want *all* our students to succeed, we must address the concerns of teachers of color in the state. The goal of this campaign is to engage with everyone who believes that we must make sure California's students have the well-prepared #TeachersWeNeed to build a stronger and smarter California for all. Join us and learn more at [teachersweneed.org](https://teachersweneed.org).

At a recent reception in Sacramento, EdTrust-West honored eight legislators for championing education equity bills. At the event, EdTrust-West staff connected with legislators and others who advocate for Black, Latino, Native American, Asian American, and Pacific Islander students in California. Gov. Gavin Newsom was among the awardees for securing funding for schools and supporting teacher professional development for a new math curriculum.

## EdTrust-New York

In December, the Rockefeller Foundation released a [report](#) on the Foundation Aid Formula. EdTrust-New York [praised](#) the report for its equity focus but criticized its short timeline and limited stakeholder involvement. The report overlooked key areas, including funding for students who are unhoused, in foster care, or enrolled in early education programs.

EdTrust-New York also issued its three-year Impact Report, [Moving New York Forward: A Look at EdTrust-New York's Recent Impact](#), outlining key policy wins and efforts to advance educational justice for Black, Latino, Native American, immigrant, and other marginalized students.

After the governor's State of the State address in January, EdTrust-New York [voiced](#) support for the proposals that align with our priorities — such as expanding the Empire State Child Tax Credit, funding for college in high school programs, and creating a state longitudinal data system — and disappointment that the governor failed to build on last year's investments in early literacy and FAFSA completion.

## EdTrust-Midwest

EdTrust-Midwest gained significant attention from the media, policymakers and advocates after the launch of a multipronged statewide campaign focused on Michigan's teacher shortage. New data analyses by ETM found that the most underserved Michigan students face the highest rates of inexperienced teachers, teachers with emergency or temporary credentials, and educators teaching classes outside their field of expertise. The analyses were featured in EdTrust-Midwest's latest report, [Closing the Opportunity Divide: Addressing Michigan's Teacher Shortage Problem for Students Most in Need](#). The report is a compilation of more than two years of research, data analyses, and focus groups with Michigan educators. It details how the growing educator shortage impacts students and public schools and incorporates several multitier policy solutions designed to tackle important state-level drivers of the problem. ETM's campaign features testimonials, quotations, and blogs from diverse educators and those who are impacted, as well as briefings, advocacy and knowledge-building opportunities.

## EdTrust-Tennessee

EdTrust-Tennessee ended 2024 by hosting Rising Together: Supporting Undocumented Students to and Through Postsecondary, a statewide convening that brought together nearly 100 advocates to address opportunity gaps. The event featured our [latest research](#), [actionable resources](#), and a panel of students and college leaders, sparking conversations about policy shifts, campus strategies, and the power of community partnerships.

In 2025, our focus shifted to the legislative session, marked by the release of our [2025 Policy Agenda](#) and tools for advocates, including a [Bill Tracker](#) analyzing key education legislation. We held a webinar featuring insights from Rep. Mark White, House Education Administration Committee Chair, and Sen. Raumesh Akbari, Senate Minority Leader. We've also been leading efforts against voucher expansion, producing resources such as: [A Call to Protect Tennessee's Public Schools](#), [Vouchers Unveiled: What's at Stake for Tennessee's Public Schools](#), and [Vouchers: What Advocates Should Know for the 2025 Tennessee Legislative Session](#).

## EdTrust in Louisiana

Our Amplify Louisiana students organized a student advocacy training and voter registration drive aimed at empowering younger voters. We partnered with local schools and colleges to engage students and were able to register over 200 first-time voters.

Our team has prioritized improving school culture and climate as a crucial factor in enhancing student outcomes and creating inclusive learning environments. We surveyed students at Southern, Florida A&M, and Louisiana State Universities. Through this survey and focus groups, we plan to develop recommendations for fostering more equitable and supportive environments, particularly at schools serving underserved communities.

## EdTrust in Texas

With the biennial legislative session in full swing, our team is working nonstop to pursue [policy priorities](#) that will deliver more equitable school funding, more diverse and well-prepared teachers, stronger early reading and math instruction, and postsecondary success for every Texas student. We are also working on multiple fronts — directly and with trusted partners — to defend equal opportunity for Texans of all backgrounds to learn and succeed.

Our efforts continue to lift up promising solutions championed by students, families, and teachers. In Houston, our teacher- and parent-led coalition is advocating to [expand access to quality pre-K programs](#) and [reward and retain effective educators](#).

After taking the stage to [address more than 500 higher education leaders in December](#), members of our Student Advisory Council [led more than 800 of their peers from across the state](#) to advocate for continued investment in college access and success at the Capitol.

## EdTrust in Massachusetts

As math performance [sharply declines](#) across the country, alarming [new data](#) shows that Massachusetts students are entering higher education with inadequate math skills. This issue is especially crucial given [new research](#) highlighting math achievement as a stronger predictor of future earnings than reading proficiency or health factors. We partnered with The MassINC Polling Group to conduct a statewide survey of parents of K-12 students and hosted an event to discuss policy solutions. Results showed 54% of parents say their child is “doing well” in math, while 36% believe their child is “doing OK.” The poll garnered significant media attention, bolstering efforts to raise awareness and foster a meaningful dialogue about improving math education. Explore the full results and view the event [here](#).

## Spotlight: Sayda Martinez-Alvarado

Senior Higher Education Policy Analyst



Congratulations to our very own Sayda Martinez-Alvarado for being selected as a 2025 Rhodes Scholar! As a senior higher education policy analyst, she has contributed so much to EdTrust, most recently with her work on campus racial climate and FAFSA applications. We wish her all the best as she pursues her postgraduate studies at Oxford.

## P-12



## Equity & Assessments

In keeping with EdTrust's longtime focus on using assessments to improve outcomes for students, the P-12 team rounded out the year with releases of research examining the equity implications of two new assessment models.

Schools have responded to students' increased mental-health and social-emotional needs with new initiatives, and it's essential for district leaders to know if those programs are working for all students. Unlike traditional academic assessments, which have been extensively studied and scrutinized by psychometricians and others, social, emotional, and academic development (SEAD)

assessments are newer and often fail to meet their intended purposes. Additionally, they do not measure SEAD in a way that promotes equity. We were proud to release the first-ever [comprehensive tool for education leaders](#) to evaluate assessments of social-emotional learning. The EdTrust team also looked at [11 widely used SEAD assessments](#) to see [how well they met the evaluation criteria](#).

We also published [two papers](#) on [through-year assessments](#), a system of smaller exams given throughout the year that can provide more timely — and therefore actionable — data about student performance and the additional supports they might need. EdTrust weighed in on a nascent assessment model being piloted in a handful of states, ensuring that advocates and state assessment leaders have the resources needed to ensure that this new model promotes equity.

## Higher Ed



## FAFSA and DEI

The higher education team has been a steadfast advocate, speaking out against the significant threats that Project 2025 poses to higher education funding, accessibility, and academic freedom.

We've consistently supported undocumented, mixed-status, and other students as they navigated the challenges of the new Better FAFSA. By providing valuable input to the Department of Education, we highlighted the obstacles that students and

families faced and proposed practical solutions to ensure successful FAFSA completion. Our efforts included launching digital campaigns urging students not to leave money on the table, amplifying awareness following successful advocacy that secured an increase in Pell Grant funding.

Amid a divided Congress and a climate hostile to DEI initiatives, we're proud to see progress, such as the CAMPUS Act, which was informed by EdTrust data and policy recommendations. This marks a significant step toward fostering inclusive and supportive environments for students from all backgrounds. This work underscores our commitment to equity in higher education and to ensuring that every student has an opportunity to thrive.

*EdTrust's work would not be possible without the generosity of our donors. See the full list [here](#).*