



STATE POLICIES  
IMPACTING CTE:

2021  
YEAR IN REVIEW



COVID-19 (coronavirus) fundamentally disrupted the way education is delivered, forcing legislators, administrators, teachers and students to adapt to virtual learning while wrestling with school reopening.

In 2020, state education agencies, legislators and educators faced significant challenges from the coronavirus pandemic, including adapting to remote and hybrid teaching while supporting learners — many of whom were struggling with financial, socio-emotional and health concerns. Because the pandemic was on the forefront of stakeholders' agendas, the number of states enacting policies affecting Career Technical Education (CTE) and the number of state-level CTE policies enacted fell to the lowest number since Advance CTE and the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) began publishing these annual Year in Review reports.



"... educators faced significant challenges from the coronavirus pandemic, including adapting to remote and hybrid teaching while supporting learners"

## 2021 YEAR IN REVIEW

With record-setting numbers of Americans leaving their jobs, these CTE-related policies will be critical to provide career exploration opportunities and prepare learners to fill in-demand, high-skill and high-wage occupations.

**IN 2021**, states faced a new set of pandemic-related challenges. Although in-person education resumed in many communities, high levels of learner disengagement were still apparent. Disengagement extended beyond education and into the labor market,<sup>1</sup> resulting in skilled labor shortages.<sup>2</sup> In the second year of the pandemic, states moved past the temporary emergency actions deployed in 2020 to make strategic education and workforce investments in response to ongoing stressors affecting schools, colleges and the labor market. As a result, this past year saw a return to a more typical volume of CTE-related state policy actions. **With record-setting numbers of Americans leaving their jobs,<sup>3</sup> these CTE-related policies will be critical to provide career exploration opportunities and prepare learners to fill in-demand, high-skill and high-wage occupations.<sup>4</sup>** In 2021, 41 states enacted 138 policies affecting CTE and career readiness, including legislation, executive orders, and budget provisions that significantly changed funding. Policies that were passed affected the secondary education, postsecondary education, adult education and/or workforce systems.

The 2021 report marks the ninth annual review of CTE and career readiness policies from across the United States conducted by Advance CTE and ACTE. This report does not describe every policy enacted within each state but instead focuses on national policy trends. Readers looking for specific state policies can visit the [online state policy tracker](#) and filter by state; system level; and/or analysis tags such as funding, industry-recognized credentials or work-based learning.

IN 2021:

**41**

states enacted  
or passed

**138**

policy actions

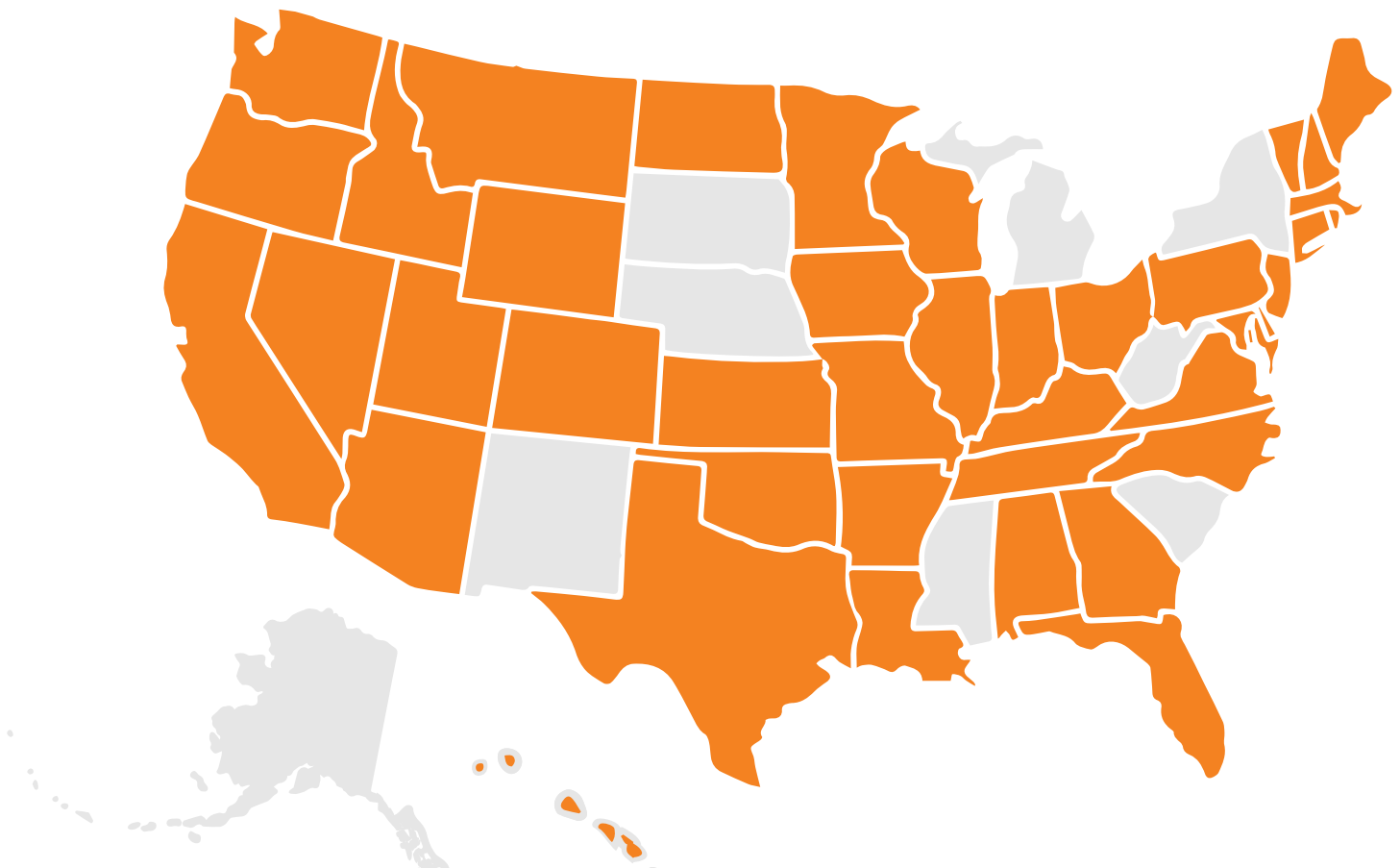
**CLICK HERE**

to view all 2021  
State Policies

**2021 State  
Policy Tracker**

## THE 41 STATES that enacted policy related to CTE in 2021 were:

Alabama	Illinois	Mississippi	Oregon
Arizona	Indiana	Missouri	Pennsylvania
Arkansas	Iowa	Montana	Rhode Island
California	Kansas	Nevada	South Dakota
Colorado	Kentucky	New Hampshire	Tennessee
Connecticut	Louisiana	New Jersey	Utah
Delaware	Maine	North Carolina	Vermont
Florida	Maryland	North Dakota	Virginia
Georgia	Massachusetts	Ohio	Washington
Hawai'i	Minnesota	Oklahoma	West Virginia
Idaho			



## TOP FIVE KEY POLICY TRENDS

**AS IN PREVIOUS YEARS,** this analysis categorizes each policy action by topic.

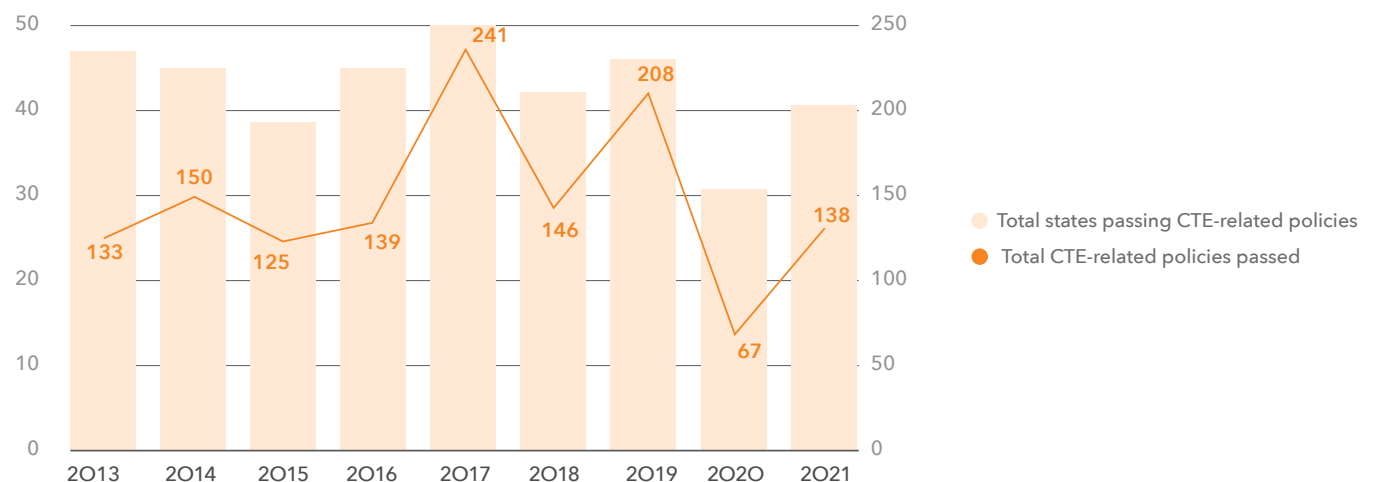
In 2021, state policy most frequently addressed the following topics:

1. Funding (51 policies enacted)
2. Access and equity (45)
3. Data, reporting and/or accountability (36)
4. Industry partnerships and work-based learning (36)
5. Industry-recognized credentials (33)

Many policies are categorized under multiple topic areas. A more comprehensive “Methodology” section describing how policies were included and categorized can be found at the end of this report.

The policy areas that states focused on in 2021 were similar to previous years. In 2020, funding; access and equity; data, reporting and/or accountability; and industry partnerships and work-based learning were also part of the top five. In 2021, industry-recognized credentials replaced dual/concurrent enrollment, articulation and early college as one of the top five key policy areas, perhaps in part due to states’ desire to upskill and reskill workers and learners disrupted by the pandemic.<sup>5</sup>

Number of States Passing CTE-related Policies and Number of CTE-related Policies Passed, (2013- 2021)



## Categories of enacted CTE-related policy in 2021

**THE FOLLOWING TABLE** shares the top 10 policy areas affecting CTE in 2021. For a full listing of all policies and policy categories, please [see the full tracker](#). A single law or policy can address multiple policy categories.

POLICY CATEGORY	# OF POLICIES ENACTED	STATES THAT ENACTED POLICIES IN THIS CATEGORY
<b>Funding</b>		
<p>Policies address significant changes in CTE funding, such as increasing or decreasing allocations, creating a scholarship or grant program, or investing in a pilot program.</p> <p>Note: This year, no state reported a decrease in funding greater than 5 percent.</p>	51	Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas, Washington
<b>Access/Equity</b>		
<p>Policies address access to CTE as well as strategies that support success within CTE for specific populations.</p>	45	Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Hawai'i, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin
<b>Data, Reporting and/or Accountability</b>		
<p>Policies address data and research activities that support CTE, including the use of labor market information and the inclusion of career readiness indicators within accountability systems.</p>	36	Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Hawai'i, Idaho, Indiana, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, Texas, Washington
<b>Industry Partnerships and Work-Based Learning</b>		
<p>Policies address engaging industry to drive student learning through work-based learning or other means.</p>	36	Alabama, Arkansas, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawai'i, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Wyoming
<b>Industry-Recognized Credentials</b>		
<p>Policies address attainment of credentials recognized by industry, including micro-credentials, such as badges, and educational degrees.</p>	33	Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Hawai'i, Idaho, Kansas, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, Nevada, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia

## Categories of enacted CTE-related policy in 2021

POLICY CATEGORY	# OF POLICIES ENACTED	STATES THAT ENACTED POLICIES IN THIS CATEGORY
<b>Governance</b>		
Policies address responsibility within the state for CTE, including new committees or task forces and transfers of authority.	28	Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawai'i, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Missouri, Nevada, New Hampshire, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Virginia
<b>Dual/Concurrent Enrollment, Articulation and Early College</b>		
Policies address postsecondary credit attainment and transfer through dual/concurrent credit attainment, credit transfer agreements and early college programs.	24	Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Washington
<b>Career/Academic Counseling</b>		
Policies address school counselors or career advisers providing guidance such as disseminating college and career information and implementing individual academic and career plans.	20	Arkansas, Colorado, Delaware, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Maine, Missouri, New Jersey, Ohio, Tennessee, Texas, Washington
<b>Coronavirus</b>		
Policies explicitly address the coronavirus pandemic, including increases or decreases to CTE funding, initiatives addressing the impact of the pandemic and changes to existing requirements. Policies allocating federal stimulus dollars were also included in this category.	17	Colorado, Hawai'i, Kentucky, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, Vermont
<b>Prior Learning/Competency-Based Education</b>		
Policies address a learner's ability to receive credit for prior learning for on-the-job training, project-based assessments or portfolio-based assessments.	16	Alabama, Florida, Idaho, Indiana, Montana, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, Washington



## SPOTLIGHT ON FEDERAL STIMULUS FUNDING IN CTE

**THIS YEAR, SOME STATES CHOSE** to dedicate American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA); Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act; Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act; and other state fiscal recovery funding to investments in job training programs, learner re-engagement strategies, and institutional support for CTE providers. With unprecedented investments from federal stimulus funding, states were able to lessen the impact of the coronavirus on CTE and on education in their state more broadly.



**COLORADO** allocated more than \$50 million in ARPA funds from the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund to the Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative, designed to support and re-engage postsecondary learners who earned some credits but did not complete a degree or industry-recognized credential, as well as prospective learners who were admitted to postsecondary institutions in the 2020-21 school year but did not enroll. The Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative advisory board will allocate this funding to public institutions of higher education that have submitted a plan explaining how they will provide financial assistance and support to targeted learners.



**HAWAI'I** created a green job youth corps program through the Department of Land and Natural Resources to provide temporary work and training opportunities for young adults between the ages of 20 and 40 in response to unemployment caused by the coronavirus pandemic. The program provides opportunities in fields such as agriculture, conservation, natural resource management, renewable energy, and other professions centered around sustainability. Hawai'i will fund salaries for up to 1,000 positions using \$5 million in ARPA money from the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund.



**PENNSYLVANIA** allocated \$63.5 million in combined Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief funds and Governor's Emergency Education Relief funds for area CTE schools. This funding is critical to mitigate the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on CTE providers and maintain CTE programs that will be key for economic recovery.



## FUNDING

IN 2021  
**24**  
states  
ENACTED  
**51**  
policies

Twenty-four states enacted 51 policies in 2021 that affected CTE funding, making funding the most common policy category for the ninth year in a row. Policies in this category include grants, scholarships and state budget appropriations. Budgets or other legislation that did not significantly change CTE allocations from previous fiscal years (meaning they did not increase funding by at least 5 percent) were not included in this report. Because this category only refers to state dollars, any state legislation or executive order allocating federal stimulus funding was designated in the full tracker using the appropriate tags but not as “funding.”



**COLORADO** created an energy sector career pathway and established the Strengthening Photovoltaic and Renewable Careers (SPARC) Workforce Development Program. The goal of this program is to create capacity for training, apprenticeship and education programs in the energy career pathway, with a goal of increasing employment in this sector. The law allocates **\$5 million in new funding** to a newly created SPARC fund for the purposes of this program.



**DELAWARE** established and expanded multiple statewide scholarship programs, including the Focus on Alternative Skills Training (FAST) Program and the Elevate Delaware program. These programs **provide up to \$10,000 each to eligible Delaware residents** toward tuition for non-degree credential programs that provide industry-recognized skill training and certification. The law allocates up to \$1 million for FAST and up to \$1.5 million for Elevate Delaware.



**KANSAS** established the **Kansas Promise Scholarship Program**, administered by the Kansas State Board of Regents. The program serves as a last-dollar scholarship to assist learners with financial barriers that may prevent them from completing a two-year associate degree program or CTE certificate program aligned to in-demand careers and credentials. Upon completion of their program, recipients must live in Kansas for two years.

## ACCESS AND EQUITY

IN 2021:

**27**  
states  
ENACTED  
**45**  
policies

Twenty-seven states enacted 45 policies related to access and equity. For this category, states implemented changes that aim to expand access to CTE for historically marginalized learners, including learners of color and learners with special population status such as learners with disabilities, learners who are economically disadvantaged, participants in fields of study that are non-traditional for their gender, single parents and out-of-workforce individuals.<sup>6</sup> This category also includes middle school CTE programming that exposes all learners at an earlier age to CTE programs and related occupations. Finally, this category includes legislation that increases diversity in the CTE educator workforce.



**ILLINOIS** directed districts and community colleges to ensure access for individual learners with disabilities to postsecondary CTE and dual credit courses. The law requires that dual credit opportunities be supported under the learner's Section 504 plan or in their Individualized Education Plan.



**VIRGINIA** expanded the conditions for receiving benefits under the Virginia Initiative for Education and Work, a program for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families recipients, and benefits under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program to include participation in educational activities that lead to a postsecondary credential from an accredited institution of higher education or other postsecondary school.



**WASHINGTON** required that all state community and technical colleges develop, in collaboration with diverse stakeholders, strategic plans to achieve diversity, equity and inclusion. Colleges must submit the first of these biennial strategic plans by July 30, 2022. Community and technical colleges must also implement guided pathways, including comprehensive program mapping, dedicated advising and career counseling, analysis of learner outcome data, and a learner success support infrastructure. In addition, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges must develop a model faculty diversity program to aid in the recruitment and retention of faculty from diverse backgrounds.

## DATA, REPORTING AND/OR ACCOUNTABILITY

IN 2021:  
**23**  
states  
ENACTED  
**36**  
policies

Tied for the third most common policy area, 23 states enacted 36 policies related to data, reporting and/or accountability measures. Policies in this category include those for which the core purpose is to conduct research and provide a legislative report; those that adapt a state's accountability structure; or those designed to promote data quality, sharing and transparency, including the use of labor market data.



**HAWAII** enacted a law requiring the **State Board of Career and Technical Education** to oversee and review data processes related to industry-recognized credential attainment and publish an annual report to all stakeholders. The law also dictates that the Department of Education must share industry-recognized credential data through the statewide longitudinal data system and expands requirements to store and analyze CTE data in this data system. The statewide longitudinal data system is collectively governed by the Hawai'i Department of Education, the University of Hawai'i, the Hawai'i Department of Labor and Industrial Relations and other agencies.



**MARYLAND** defined terms such as **industry certificate, license, industry certifier and vocational certificate**, among others, to ensure consistency in data collection and reporting for the Maryland Longitudinal Data System. The law also requires that licensing authorities and industry certifiers comply with the data requirements, data security plan and implementation schedule for the Maryland Longitudinal Data System.



**MISSOURI** enacted the **Students' Right to Know Act**, which requires that the state Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development provide an annual report on in-demand jobs in the state; the average cost of public institutions of higher education and vocational schools; completion rates of apprenticeship, high school credential and CTE programs; and the average starting salary for graduates of public institutions of higher education and vocational schools, among other data.

## INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS AND WORK-BASED LEARNING

IN 2021:

**23**  
states  
ENACTED  
**36**  
policies

Industry partnerships and work-based learning was the fourth most common policy category in 2021, with 23 states enacting 36 policies in this area. This category includes business-education partnerships overall and work-based learning as a primary strategy to connect learners with businesses



**INDIANA** passed legislation establishing a course catalog for lifelong learning to document all work-based learning, pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship opportunities, statewide and directing the state Commission for Higher Education, the Department of Education and the Governor's Workforce Cabinet to prepare model guidance for postsecondary enrollment in work-based learning experiences. The law also established a postsecondary prior learning assessment clearinghouse to inventory learning assessments that enable learners to be eligible for postsecondary credit at all undergraduate state educational institutions. The clearinghouse also collects information on assessments' alignment with career pathways, CTE courses and industry-recognized credentials.



**OKLAHOMA** expanded eligibility for apprenticeships, mentorships and internships to include high school sophomores ages 16 and older. The law also allows school districts to obtain liability insurance for learners participating in apprenticeships, mentorships and internships and enables the State Board of Education to develop rules to determine if these experiences are eligible for academic credit toward graduation requirements.



**WYOMING** allowed learners ages 16 to 18 who are enrolled in a school district, community college or technical school to enter into an agreement with an employer to participate in a work-based learning experience that leads to course credit and/or compensation from the employer. A learner who enters into a student training agreement with an employer is considered an employee covered under that employer's workers' compensation program.

## INDUSTRY-RECOGNIZED CREDENTIALS

IN 2021:

**19**  
states  
ENACTED  
**33**  
policies

In the fifth most common policy area, 19 states enacted 33 policies affecting industry-recognized credentials. Policies in this area are designed to increase or incentivize the attainment of certifications, credentials or degrees aligned with labor market information or industry need.



**IDAHO** established a workforce readiness and CTE high school diploma.

The law outlines the requirements for learners to earn the diploma, such as passing technical skills assessments and workplace readiness assessments, demonstrating CTE competency standards, and earning a badge or an industry-recognized credential..



**LOUISIANA** created the **M.J. Foster Promise Program**, which provides financial assistance of up to \$3,200/year to a learner enrolling in a two-year or shorter postsecondary program aligned to a state-recognized in-demand, high-wage occupational field and leading to an industry-recognized credential. The program targets learners with low income by establishing income eligibility guidelines. The law also created an advisory council to review every three years which programs of study will qualify for this financial assistance.



**TEXAS** established the **Texas Reskilling and Upskilling through Education (TRUE) program**. This program awards grants to an eligible agency, such as a junior college, technical institute or local chamber of commerce, to create, redesign or expand training programs that lead to industry-recognized credentials and create pathways to employment for learners in accordance with local workforce needs. This law also directs the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to work with the Texas Workforce Commission and employers to identify postsecondary industry certifications or workforce credentials in in-demand occupations.

## SYSTEMS AFFECTED

2021  
STATE PASSED  
POLICIES:

**107**  
secondary  
education


**70**  
postsecondary  
education

**46**  
adult learning  
and/or  
workforce  
development

This analysis categorizes policies by the systems and learner levels affected: secondary education, postsecondary education, adult education and/or workforce development. This is the fourth year that policies have been categorized by system. In 2021, states passed 107 policies that affected CTE in secondary education, 70 policies related to postsecondary CTE, and 46 policies related to adult CTE and/or workforce development. As in prior years, this analysis identified more policies affecting the secondary system than any other system.

Given that CTE is at the nexus of the secondary, postsecondary and workforce development systems, it is not surprising that a single policy may address multiple systems. These policies frequently illustrate how secondary schools and postsecondary institutions partner with each other and with employers and industries to provide high-quality and equitable CTE programs.

Examples of policies that affected multiple systems include:



**FLORIDA** passed the Reimagining Education and Career Help Act, which aims to coalesce workforce and education systems by establishing the Office of Reimagining Education and Career Help in the Executive Office of the Governor to oversee the Workforce Development Information System; directing the State Board of Education to create minimum requirements for participation in work-based learning; appointing a Credentials Review Committee to create a public master list of non-degree credentials of value; launching the Open Door Grant to cover the cost of short-term high-demand postsecondary programs; establishing the Money-Back Guarantee Program, which refunds tuition to learners unable to find a job six months after completing select workforce programs; identifying and adopting a nationally recognized digital credential in all state public postsecondary institutions; and developing a public workforce opportunity data portal.

## SYSTEMS AFFECTED



**GEORGIA** changed the name of the Office of College and Career Transitions to the Office of College and Career Academies within Georgia's technical college system. The law also gives this office responsibility for technical skill development and directs the Technical College System of Georgia, in collaboration with the Workforce Development Board and the Department of Economic Development, to support this office in the recruitment of new industries and expansion of existing industries by demonstrating the technical preparation of high school graduates.



**TEXAS** formalized through legislative action a Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative to coordinate information among the Texas Education Agency, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and the Texas Workforce Commission. The purpose of this initiative is to ensure that state and federal education and workforce funds are coordinated among agencies to achieve state workforce development goals, align CTE programs to industry demand, and identify outcomes of CTE programs related to state workforce development goals. The law also requires a data sharing policy, coordination of staff and resources, and quarterly meetings among the agencies. In addition, the initiative will create publicly accessible tools for education and workforce data, approved credentials, and career exploration and development resources.



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## METHODOLOGY

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The policy activities included in this report and the accompanying policy tracker were compiled through a comprehensive national scan, drawing on information from numerous sources. Policies were identified and cataloged using government websites and media stories and were augmented by compilations such as those prepared by the Education Commission of the States and the National Association of State Budget Officers. Once compiled, the information was distributed to State CTE Directors for review, and any feedback was included in this final report and policy tracker. For the purposes of this report, policy activity was defined to be an action by state policymakers, including the state legislature, the board of education, the state education agency, the higher education authority, the governor's office or any other state-level agencies, or a ballot initiative approved by voters. Although several national career readiness initiatives, such as the New Skills ready network, were underway across the states, involvement in these initiatives was not included unless it spurred notable state policy change.

To be included in this report, policies must have been passed during the 2021 calendar year, have statewide impact, and be related to career readiness or CTE within the state. This report is designed to be value neutral. Inclusion of a specific policy or action is for informational purposes only and does not reflect any judgment regarding the quality or strength of that policy. Policies introduced in 2020 and passed in 2021 were included; policies that went into effect in 2021 but were passed in prior years were not included. However, if a state took meaningful action to implement in 2020 a policy passed earlier – for instance, a state board action approving new graduation requirements in 2021 in response to legislation enacted in 2020 – that 2021 action was included. Policies were categorized as funding if they authorized new or increased state funding or if they decreased funding to a specific program. Funding policies were not included if they were implemented in 2021 but were authorized in prior years, unless those policies repurposed or restructured existing funds in a way that affected CTE and career readiness.

Any policy that was enacted in response to the coronavirus pandemic that utilized federal funding for CTE-related programs was not included unless the funding was used in conjunction with additional state funding or through state executive/legislative order.

While extensive efforts were made to verify the completeness and accuracy of this report, should discrepancies be noted, we would be happy to correct them at any time. Please contact Advance CTE Senior Policy Associate Dan Hinderliter ([dhinderliter@careertech.org](mailto:dhinderliter@careertech.org)) or ACTE Policy Research Associate Cece Hohman ([chohman@acteonline.org](mailto:chohman@acteonline.org)).



## STATE POLICIES IMPACTING CTE:

# 2021

YEAR IN REVIEW

## SOURCES

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- <sup>2</sup> National Association for Business Economics. (2021, October). *Business conditions survey*. [https://nabe.com/NABE/Surveys/Business\\_Conditions\\_Surveys/October-2021-Business-Conditions-Survey-Summary.aspx](https://nabe.com/NABE/Surveys/Business_Conditions_Surveys/October-2021-Business-Conditions-Survey-Summary.aspx)
- <sup>3</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics. (2021, November 12). *Job openings and labor turnover: Quits levels and rates by industry and region, seasonally adjusted*. <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/jolts.t04.htm>
- <sup>4</sup> American Student Assistance. (2021). *How Gen Z approaches decision-making: Education and career*. <https://file.asa.org/uploads/ASA-Gen-Z-and-Decision-Making-Summary.pdf>
- <sup>5</sup> Education Strategy Group. (n.d.). *Pivot to recover: State postsecondary attainment agendas in the era of COVID-19*. [https://edstrategy.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Pivot-to-Recover\\_FINAL.pdf](https://edstrategy.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Pivot-to-Recover_FINAL.pdf)
- <sup>6</sup> The definition of special populations in Perkins V includes the following groups: individuals with disabilities; low-income youth and adults; individuals preparing for nontraditional fields; single parents, including single pregnant women; out-of-workforce individuals; English learners; homeless individuals; youth who are in, or have aged out of, the foster care system; and youth with a parent who is an active-duty member of the armed forces.