

# No Dead Ends

## JFF's Federal and State Policy Road Map for Eliminating Dead Ends at School, at Work, and in Life

In today's dynamic economy, marked by rapidly rising and falling demand for certain skills and jobs, old approaches to education and work are producing dead ends for millions of people. More than half of the U.S. labor force — 92 million workers — are stuck without quality jobs and face systemic barriers to advancement. At Jobs for the Future (JFF), we're reimagining a learn-and-work system with **no dead ends** to economic opportunity. That means:

- **No limits** on the aspirations of learners and workers.
- **No artificial endpoints** on career pathways—meaning no credentials with little value in the labor market, no ceilings on advancing at work, and no barriers to gaining credit and recognition for skills, competencies, and credentials that people have already acquired through prior learning and work experiences.
- **No impossible choices** between pursuing opportunities to advance one's career and taking care of family responsibilities.
- **No harmful risks** when making decisions to change directions in one's work and learning journey, such as pursuing a new skill or entering a new career.

We believe we can achieve this vision if policymakers enact common-sense, field-tested policy solutions. That's why we've launched a national campaign we call **No Dead Ends** to provide federal and state lawmakers with a road map for policy action.

## Four Policy Priorities for Putting an End to Dead Ends



- 1** Empower people with data, guidance, and resources that enable them to navigate their work and learning journeys.



- 3** Blur the lines between learning and work systems to foster common purpose among educators and employers.



- 2** Recognize everyone's skills, knowledge, and expertise, regardless of when and where their learning and development experiences occur.



- 4** Help people get ahead during times of economic uncertainty and personal adversity.



### Sign the Pledge

We need your help to drive change. Please sign our No Dead Ends pledge and join us in our work to eliminate dead ends for millions of workers and learners. Together, we can transform the learn-and-work system and expand economic opportunities for everyone.



#### PRIORITY 1

**Empower people with data, guidance, and resources that enable them to navigate their chosen work and learning journeys and flourish throughout their lives.**

What policymakers can do to bring clarity to the chaotic work and learning ecosystem:

- Set statewide goals for doubling the number of people in quality jobs.
- Strengthen the efficacy of publicly funded programs.
- Establish a comprehensive career navigation system.
- Provide flexible, portable funding for skills acquisition and lifelong learning.



#### PRIORITY 2

**Recognize everyone's skills, knowledge, and expertise, regardless of when and where their learning and development experiences occur.**

What policymakers can do to center skills in education, workforce, and employment systems:

- Make awarding credit for prior learning and work experiences a common and consistent practice in education and workforce systems.
- Build conditions for skills-based hiring by bolstering the adoption of digital learning and employment records as an alternative to traditional resumes.



#### PRIORITY 3

**Blur the lines between learning and work systems to foster common purpose among educators and employers and to smooth pathways to economic advancement.**

What policymakers can do to begin to erase the disconnects between learning and work:

- Ensure that all college-in-high school course offerings are aligned with college and career pathways.
- Mobilize employers to expand access to meaningful, paid work-based learning experiences.



#### PRIORITY 4

**Help people get ahead during times of economic uncertainty and personal adversity.**

What policymakers can do to limit the risks associated with decisions about work and learning and to remove structural barriers to opportunity:

- Use outcomes-based financing solutions to promote a more student-friendly market for education and training.
- Make family assistance programs work for all learners and workers—especially for people on the front lines of caregiving.
- Enable fair chances at economic advancement for people with criminal records by increasing access to postsecondary education and training aligned to quality jobs.