



Supporting BLS and the critical data and tools it provides

March 1, 2018

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services and Education
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services
and Education
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Baldwin,

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) of the U.S. Department of Labor is the principal federal agency responsible for measuring labor market activity, working conditions, and price changes in the economy. Federal agencies and countless businesses, state and local governments, researchers, and policy makers rely on the uniquely accurate, objective and timely statistical information produced by BLS.

Among the critically important products that BLS provides are the:

- Jobs outlook upon which job seekers, employers and matriculating students plan their participation in the labor market;
- Consumer Price Index, which measures inflation and guides monetary policy;
- National, state and local job growth, unemployment and wages that track the business cycle and regional labor market conditions;
- Measures of productivity that gauge our nation's economic performance; and
- Monthly data on the change in the prices of imported and exported goods.

As you prepare the Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations bill, **the undersigned members of the Friends of BLS urge you to revitalize BLS's budget and provide the agency with \$629 million in budget authority, an increase of \$20 million over the FY 17 enacted, to fill critical gaps in their staffing and technology upgrades.**

Over the last decade, BLS's funding has remained flat, which has dramatically reduced the bureau's resources in terms of real dollars. As a result, they have had to cut back on replacement and development of staff and to delay modernizing data and processes. This additional funding will allow BLS to cover critical gaps in upgrading technology, staffing and training, activities that are vital to building the strong evidence infrastructure sought by this administration.

It is BLS's mission to collect, analyze and disseminate essential economic information to support public and private decision making. No other agency provides the labor market, workforce and consumer price data upon which we, our members, and so many more rely. Thank you for supporting this crucial agency and its role in evidence-based policy making.

Sincerely,

Erica Groshen, Chair

John Thompson, Co-Chair



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Organizations

American Sociological Association
American Statistical Association
Association of Population Centers
Association of Public Data Users
California Center for Population Research at UCLA
Center for Human Resource Research at the Ohio State University
Cornell Population Center
Council for Professional Associations for Federal Statistics
CUNY Institute for Demographic Research
Haver Analytics
Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan
ICPSR at the University of Michigan
National Association for Business Economists
Population Association of America
Puerto Rico Institute of Statistics
W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research
Workforce Data Quality Campaign

Individuals

Affiliations listed for identification only. Individuals have signed on their own behalf, and the views expressed are their own, not those of their institution, trustees or funders.

John B. Casterline, Director, Institute for Population Research at the Ohio State University
Jack Kleinhenz, Kleinhenz & Associates
Demetra Nightingale, Urban Institute
Andrew Reamer, GW Institute of Public Policy, George Washington University
Raymond Stone, Rutgers University, former BLS's Data Users Advisory Committee
Brady West, ISR and JPSM University of Maryland, Statistical Consultant for CSCAR