

Friends of Labor Statistics

July 31, 2017

The Honorable William Thad Cochran, Chair
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Capitol Building S-128, Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Capital Building S-128, Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blount, Chair
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Blount, Murray, Cochran and Leahy,

If the U.S. hopes to compete in complex, increasingly data-driven global markets, and understand U.S. employment dynamics in a way that informs job growth policy, it needs Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) survey data and economic indicators. Specifically, BLS provides data, programs, and products that serve our economy and workforce by:

- measuring labor market activity that supplies the critical gauge of our nation's employment/unemployment status;
- tracking consumer and producer price changes and developing price indicators, such as the principal inflation-measuring Consumer Price Index;
- calculating the productivity of business endeavors in a manner that can be compared across sectors and countries;
- monitoring working conditions; and
- informing state and local labor markets

BLS has been belt-tightening for several years of stagnant funding in order to continue delivering the majority of its programs and surveys, each of which has strong advocates. The agency has cut staff levels, staff training and development, reduced investments in research, and postponed the modernization of information technology systems and survey methodologies. *This is not sustainable.* It diminishes the intellectual and physical capacity of BLS, increases the possibility of program failure, and introduces quality tradeoffs. We believe that a continuation of these practices at constant funding levels risks serious deterioration of the Bureau's statistical products. A FY 2018 appropriation closer to \$623 million would eliminate those risks.

With gratitude for your past support of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, we respectfully suggest your serious consideration of sufficient funding for the Bureau's statistical programs.

American Educational Research Association
American Psychological Association, Education Directorate, Center for Workforce Studies
American Statistical Association
APB Associates
Association of Public Data Users
Dr. Robert Bednarzik, McCourt School of Public Policy, Georgetown University
Dr. Eric Brynjolfsson, Massachusetts Institute of technology
Consortium of Social Science Associations
Council for Community and Economic Research
Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics
Development Strategies
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Maurine A. Haver, Haver Analytics
National Apartment Association
National Association for Business Economics
National Association of Home Builders
National Multifamily Housing Council
Population Association of America
Dr. Andrew Reamer, George Washington University
Dr. Phillip Swagel, University of Maryland
Workforce Data Quality Campaign

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