



Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics

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ADVANCING EXCELLENCE IN FEDERAL STATISTICS

December 1, 2017

The Honorable Lamar Alexander Chair,
Committee on Health, Education, Labor,
and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray Ranking Member,
Committee on Health, Education, Labor,
and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Alexander and Ranking Member Murray:

As the Chair and co-chair of the Friends of the Bureau of Labor Statistics we write to enthusiastically support the nomination of William Beach as Commissioner of the of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and to urge his swift confirmation.

Dr. Beach is an excellent nominee to lead the Bureau of Labor Statistics. He holds an outstanding background and qualifications for this critical position. He currently serves as the Vice President of Research at the Mercatus Center at George Mason University. Dr. Beach previously served as the Chief Economist for the Senate Budget Committee Republican Staff. Prior to serving in that position, he was the Lazof Fellow in Economics at the Heritage Foundation and Director of the Foundations Center for Data Analysis. As Director, Dr. Beach directed research in areas with great relevance to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, including: Social Security; education; trade; and the effects of tax changes on individuals, families, business sectors, and the national economy. Dr. Beach also has corporate experience, having served as the Senior Economist at Sprint United, Inc.

As you know, accurate, timely, and readily available statistics are an essential public good in a democratic nation and free enterprise economy. Such statistics help government and private entities make better decisions, producing a more vibrant and efficient economy. By the same token, lack of such statistics or poor quality statistics can lead to poor choices that waste public and private resources and make people's lives worse. For the United States, the Bureau of Labor Statistics produces vital information about jobs and unemployment, wages, working conditions and prices. A part of the Department of Labor, the Bureau of Labor Statistics is the second largest and the oldest statistical agency within the Federal government. For more than 125 years, the Bureau of Labor Statistics has collected, analyzed, disseminated and improved essential economic information, serving as a key pillar of the knowledge infrastructure of the nation.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics is at a critical juncture, facing constrained funding at a time of growing national need and uses for gold-standard statistics and a sharp imperative for modernization. Strong leadership from Dr. Beach will help the Bureau of Labor Statistics manage these challenges. With a return to full funding and additional funds for initiatives, the BLS could restore the temporary cuts it has made, reduce risk of operational failure and accomplish many important improvements to its statistical programs. Possible improvements include

- Measuring the gig economy on an ongoing basis.
- Supporting the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act by improving timelines and regional and job detail in existing programs.

- Developing an Input Price Index by industry to provide competitiveness and outsourcing measures and improve measures of industry productivity.
- Modernizing the Consumer Expenditure Survey to reduce response burden and improve quality by taking advantage of new technologies.
- Expanding quality-adjustment efforts and detail for services and tech industry prices to keep up with growth in these parts of economic activity.
- Measuring employer-provided training for the first time since 1995 in order to track this otherwise invisible part of worker training in the US.

In summary, William Beach has a wealth of academic, legislative and corporate experience and is an outstanding nominee for Commissioner of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. We strongly recommend that the Senate confirm Dr. Beach and urge it do so quickly, so he can assume leadership of this essential agency in a timely manner.

Erica Groshen
Chair, Friends of the Bureau of Labor Statistics

John Thompson
Co-Chair, Friends of the Bureau of Labor Statistics
Executive Director, Council of Professional
Associations on Federal Statistics

APB Associates
American Statistical Association
Association of Population Centers
Association of Public Data Users
CHRR at The Ohio State University
California Center for Population Research at UCLA
Council for Community and Economic Research
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