

of various health interventions. NCES documents the performance of school systems and other educational opportunities to assess adult literacy, levels of educational achievement from early childhood through elementary, secondary, and post-secondary schools. These data provide a basis for comparisons of U.S. performance with international measures, and among U.S. states. They inform everything from school bullying policies and educational technology decisions, to local, state and federal decisions on educational programs. Everyone in the U.S. has a stake in the effectiveness of these 3 statistical agencies.

Officially designated statistical agencies must adhere to the rigorous legislative requirement of the **Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act** and live up to the standards of several Statistical Directives. They have decades (some have centuries) of experience in assuring privacy and confidentiality. Maintaining high quality while providing accurate, objective, reliable, timely, and available statistics and assuring confidentiality has several implications for their programs. First, they can't just scale down programs. A survey will not be accurate or reliable if its sample size is too small. Thus, when cost-constrained, they eliminate entire programs (always with strongly opposing stakeholders) rather than jeopardize the quality of programs across the board. Second they need to be able to invest in the quality and continued development of their highly technical staff, or risk falling behind in skills and advances in statistical methodology. They fight low wages and high hiring process complications relative to the private sector.

In FY 2015, the budgets of BLS, NCHS, and NCES are just at (in the case of NCHS) or well below (in the case of BLS) the level of funding required for them to cover all of their core responsibilities and maintain staff and technical quality. In fact, the Bureau of Labor Statistics has been operating at relatively the same inflation-adjusted appropriation level that it had in 2008 (Figure 1).

We at the Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics are concerned on behalf of the users of these federal statistics that their statistical integrity not be sacrificed in the face of decisions about “sexier” programs. Those non-statistical programs won’t be as effective, or we won’t be able to judge their effectiveness, without adequate, high quality statistics.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony. If it is not selected for inclusion in the hearing, please make it written testimony for the record.

Figure 1: Actual (Nominal) and Inflation-adjusted (Purchasing Power) Direct Appropriations to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1996-2015. Source: annual "Statistical Programs of the United States Government," Office of Management and Budget

