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

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Chair
House 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

The Honorable Tom Cole, Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services and Education
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Blunt, Chairwoman DeLauro, Ranking Member Murray, and Ranking Member
Cole:

The Bureau of Labor Statistics produces economic data that are essential for evidence-based
decision-making by businesses and financial markets, federal and local officials, and households
faced with spending and career choices. The BLS, like every federal statistical agency, must
modernize in order to produce the gold standard data on jobs, wages, skill needs, inflation,
productivity and more that our businesses, researchers, and policymakers rely on so heavily.

Last year's budget increase of $3 million (for FY 2019), enabled the BLS to take partial strategic
steps towards effective modernization, including:

- Making progress on providing an annual supplement to the Current Population Survey to
  collect data on contingent and alternative work arrangements every 2 years;
- Assessing needs and conducting minor upgrades to staff training, cybersecurity, and IT
  capacity;
- Scoping options to add a second electronic data collection facility to lower reporting
  burden on employers and improve resilience and efficiency.

Nevertheless, the budgetary situation at the BLS remains in critical condition, due to a decade of
flat funding. With the restoration of some resources, the BLS can continue to fully support
evidence-based policymaking, smart program evaluation, and confident business investment. We
urge a substantial increase in funding for BLS over the next several years in order to make up for
the loss of purchasing power and to take full advantage of advances in statistical methods to

produce the high-quality statistics required for a thriving, 21st century economy. In addition to continued work on areas noted above, needed improvements to inform current policy debates include:

- Expand the Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey to improve timeliness and add industry detail and state level reports;
- Modernize the Consumer Expenditure Survey to improve inflation statistics;
- Modernize the Industrial Price and Import/Export program systems;
- Continue research and work toward a new Survey of Employer-Provided Training.

Without these steps, the BLS will be forced to continue to use 20th-century methods to measure the 21st-century economy. Poor policy or business decisions based on inadequate or inaccurate data could stifle a growing economy and create unnecessary challenges for workers and families. It is vital the BLS has adequate resources to meet the needs of policymakers, businesses, program evaluators, researchers, and everyday Americans.

Thank you for your support of this critical part of our national data infrastructure.

Sincerely,
Erica L. Groshen, Ph.D.
Chair, The Friends of BLS
Former Commissioner, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013-2017

Organizations

A. Gary Anderson Center for Economic Research, Chapman University, Orange, California
APB Associates
American Statistical Association
Association of Population Centers
Association of Public Data Users (APDU)
Bureau of Business and Economic Research, University of Minnesota - Duluth
Center for Business and Economic Research, UNLV
Cornell University Program on Applied Demographics
Council of Professional Associations for Federal Statistics
Economic Forecasting Center at Georgia State University
Economic Policy Institute (EPI)
Greater Des Moines Partnership
Hilltop Economics
Information Technology and Innovation Foundation
Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research
Institute for Economic Forecasting, University of Central Florida

IU Business Research Center
Indiana Business Research Center
Jacksonville State University Center for Economic Development & Business Research
Kelce College of Business, Business and Economic Research Center, Pittsburg State University
MetaFacts
National Association for Business Economics
Population Association of America
Shelter Island Risk Services
Southeast Michigan Census Council
Sparks Bureau of Business and Economic Research at the University of Memphis
University of Connecticut, Connecticut Center for Economic Analysis
University of Hawaii Economic Research Organization
University of Texas at El Paso Border Region Modeling Project

Individuals

(Organizations listed for identification purposes only, and do not reflect the views of the organization as a whole.)

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Alex Wander, NYC High Schools

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Andrew Reamer, George Washington University

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Jennifer Doleac, Texas A&M University

Jennifer L Romich, University of Washington

Jesse Anttila-Hughes, University of San Francisco

Jim Spohrer, IBM.com and ISSIP.org

John Galvin, (retired) Deputy Commissioner, BLS

John Robertson, Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta

Jordan Matsudaira, Associate Professor of Economics and Education Policy

Jorge Guzman, Columbia University

Juan Salazar, Databricks

Julia Wolfe, Economic Policy Institute

Julie Hotchkisd, GSU

Katherine K Wallman, Chief Statistician of the United States (1992-2017)

Katherine Smith Evans, American Economic Association

Kelly Musick, Cornell University

Laura M Rusnak, CHRR

Lee Reynis, UNM Bureau of Business and Economic Research

Levi Pace, Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute, University of Utah

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Mark Schweitzer, Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland

Martha Jones, Vanderbilt University

Max Ghenis, Independent economic researcher

Michael Strain, American Enterprise Institute

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