July 29, 2025

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Chair, Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies, U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Grace Meng
Ranking Member, Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies, U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Chair, Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies, U.S. Senate

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
Ranking Member, Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies, U.S. Senate

Dear Committee Chairs, Members, and Staff:

We write as a bipartisan group of economists to urge you to safeguard the integrity of the U.S. statistical system by investing in its modernization.

Data provided by the federal statistical system are the lifeblood of the U.S. economy. The data fuel decision-making across every sector of the economy and in every corner of the country. Families rely on the data to make some of life's most monumental decisions, like purchasing a home. Workers rely on the data to acquire skills and discover opportunities. Entrepreneurs rely on it to start the right businesses in the right locations. Existing firms rely on it to invest in innovation and growth. State and local governments rely on it to deliver services and build infrastructure. Congress, the Presidency, and the Federal Reserve all count on timely, accurate, and granular economic data to make policy for the nation.

Our statistical agencies are outstanding—steadfast and prolific producers of the most consumed and scrutinized economic indicators in the world. The economy is changing rapidly, however. Without focused and funded efforts to modernize how these essential statistics are collected and produced, the quality and quantity of the system's output are at risk.

Surveys are the bedrock of the nation's statistical products, but response rates have been declining for decades. Agencies need to be given the space and freedom to experiment to restore them. At the same time, transitioning to a system in which less survey data is blended with more administrative and private sector data, while preserving data integrity and privacy standards, is the generationally important task facing statistical agencies today.

Quite simply, the digitization of everything calls for a re-engineering of data collection and measurement. Such plans have existed for many years, but absent adequate funding and bold political leadership they have remained just that—plans. Now is the time to translate them into action.

This moment calls for investment in the U.S. statistical agencies, not retrenchment.

The public sector role in publishing statistics that provide a complete and undistorted picture of the U.S. economy is irreplaceable. The agencies can become nimbler and more efficient by harnessing the latest technologies and deepening partnerships with the private sector, but private data is a complement to, not a substitute for, public statistics.

Modernized infrastructure and new collection techniques must also be built in parallel to the uninterrupted production of mandated statistics. The parallel build is necessary not only to meet data users' continuous needs, but also to validate and benchmark new methods.

Most agencies have had flat or declining budgets in real terms for more than a decade. More recent workforce reductions have brought headcounts to historic lows. These chronic and acute challenges have combined to bring agencies to the brink of crisis. They will need both financial resources and committed political leadership to ensure this moment of disruption lays the groundwork for a stronger future.

Specifically, we call on Congress to grant the nation's primary economics statistics agencies flat or increased FY 2026 appropriations in real terms. In the case of the U.S. Census Bureau, we call on Congress to fully fund both current and periodic surveys to ensure that base programs get the investment they need as Decennial Census preparations proceed.

In conjunction, we call on the Executive Branch to explicitly embrace the agencies' long-awaited modernization plans and grant them flexibility in spending the money appropriated to them. Statistical agencies should be trusted to procure the talent and technology they need to accomplish their missions.

The payoff from deftly navigating this moment could be huge. The advent of artificial intelligence (AI) promises to revolutionize how data are both produced and consumed. Efforts to make federal data AI-ready promise to cement the nation's advantage in this industry of the future.

On a personal note, we want to emphasize the value of the federal statistical agencies not only as producers of data, but also as anchors of a much larger ecosystem. Many of us know federal economists as co-authors and collaborators. Productive exchanges between us—data users in business and academia—and experts in the statistical community are instrumental in improving economic statistics themselves. Our ongoing collaborations regularly yield data advances and new economic indicators or data products that benefit the whole economy. The federal statistical advisory councils provide a natural forum for these productive exchanges, and we would welcome the bodies' restoration.

Critically, our statistical agencies lead the world in data *innovation*, not just data production. As creators of information, they provide an essential input to our knowledge-based economy. The work of the

agencies and their staff directly contributes to the exceptional performance of the American economy and to the quality of our public policymaking.

We urge you to invest in that innovation, invest in the needed modernization, and invest in the information that will fuel the next great era of American economic growth. The world's most formidable economy deserves the world's foremost statistical system.

Respectfully,

Aaron Sojourner, The W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research
Adam Jaffe, Brandeis University
Adam Ozimek, Economic Innovation Group
Adam Posen, Peterson Institute for International Economics
Alan Blinder, Princeton University
Alan Viard, American Enterprise Institute
Barbara L. Wolfe, University of Wisconsin-Madison (emeritus)
Basit Zafar, University of Michigan
Benjamin F. Jones, Northwestern University
Betsey Stevenson, University of Michigan
Bradley Herring, University of New Hampshire
Brian Jacob, University of Michigan
Bruce D. Meyer, University of Chicago
Chad P. Bown, Peterson Institute for International Economics
Chad Syverson, University of Chicago
Charles Brown, University of Michigan
Christopher L. House, University of Michigan
Claudia Sahm, New Century Advisors
Cordelia Reimers, Hunter College & The Graduate School of CUNY (emeritus)
Daniel J.B. Mitchell, University of California, Los Angeles (emeritus)
David Autor, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
David Wilcox, Federal Reserve Board (retired)
Diane Lim
Douglas Elmendorf, Harvard University
Douglas Holtz-Eakin, American Action Forum
Elizabeth Oltmans Ananat, Columbia University
Emma Rackstraw, Swarthmore College
Emma Wiles, Boston University
Erica L. Groshen, Cornell University
Gene Grossman, Princeton University
Glenn Hubbard, Columbia University
J. Steven Landefeld, Former Director, Bureau of Economic Analysis
Jared Bernstein, Former Chair of the White House Council of Economic Advisers
Jed Kolko
Jeffrey Frankel, Harvard University

John M. Abowd, Cornell University (emeritus)
John J. Horton, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
John Sabelhaus, Brookings Institution
Joshua Goodman, Boston University
Joshua Linn
Judith Scott-Clayton, Columbia University
Justin Wolfers, University of Michigan
Karen Dynan, Harvard University
Kari Heerman, Former Acting Chief Economist, U.S. Department of State
Katharine G. Abraham, University of Maryland
Kenneth Gillingham, Yale University
Kenneth D. Simonson, Associated General Contractors of America
Kenneth Swinnerton, Georgetown University
Kevin Rinz, Washington Center for Equitable Growth
Kyle Handley, University of California, San Diego
Lee Flemming, University of California, Berkeley
Lisa Barrow
Mallick Hossain
Margaret Levenstein, University of Michigan
Mark J. Mazur, Former Assistant Secretary for Tax Policy, U.S. Department of the Treasury
Mark Kuperberg, Swarthmore College
Martin Neil Baily, Former Chair, Council of Economic Advisers
Matthew Clancy, Open Philanthropy
Michael Geruso, University of Texas at Austin
Michael W. Horrigan, The W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research
Michael R. Strain, American Enterprise Institute
Miles Kimball, University of Colorado Boulder
Nathan Goldschlag, Economic Innovation Group
Nicholas Li, George Washington University
Nick Hagerty, Montana State University
Paul Romer, Boston College, Nobel Laureate
Paula R. Worthington, University of Chicago
Peter K. Schott, Yale University
Pia Orrenius
Rachel Marie Brooks Atkins, St. John's University
Richard Schmalensee, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Robert Seamans, New York University
Robert Litan, Former Director, Economic Studies, The Brookings Institution
Robert J. Willis, University of Michigan (emeritus)
Sandile Hlatshwayo, Former Senior Economist, Council of Economic Advisers
Sherry Glied, New York University
Stan Veuger, American Enterprise Institute
Stephen A. O'Connell, Swarthmore College
Steven B. Kamin, Former Senior Economist, Council of Economic Advisers

Steven J. Davis, Hoover Institution and Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research
Steven Ruggles, IPUMS, University of Minnesota
Susan Helper, Former Chief Economist, U.S. Department of Commerce
Teresa Fort, Tuck School at Dartmouth
Timothy Simcoe, Boston University
Timothy M. Smeeding, University of Wisconsin-Madison
Victor Bennett, Former Senior Economist, Council of Economic Advisers
Warren Whatley, University of Michigan (emeritus)

Cc:

The Honorable Howard Lutnick, Secretary, U.S. Department of Commerce
The Honorable Lori Chavez-DeRemer, Secretary, U.S. Department of Labor
The Honorable Kevin Hassett, Director, National Economic Council
The Honorable Susan Collins, Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Patty Murray, Vice Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Tom Cole, Chair, House Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Ranking Member, House Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Bill Cassidy, Chair, Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
The Honorable Bernie Sanders, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and
    Pensions
The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito, Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on
    Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
The Honorable Tammy Baldwin, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee
    on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
The Honorable Josh Hawley, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Subcommittee
    on Disaster Management, District of Columbia, and Census
The Honorable Andy Kim, Ranking Member, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental
    Affairs Subcommittee on Disaster Management, District of Columbia, and Census
The Honorable Robert Aderholt, Chair, House Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
    Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
The Honorable Eric Burlison, Chair, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on
    Economic Growth, Energy Policy and Regulatory Affairs
The Honorable Maxwell Frost, Ranking Member, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
    Subcommittee on Economic Growth, Energy Policy and Regulatory Affairs
The Honorable Rick Allen, Chair, Committee on Education and the Workforce Subcommittee on Health,
    Employment, Labor and Pensions
The Honorable Mark DeSaulnier, Ranking Member, Committee on Education and the Workforce
    Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor and Pensions