



September 24, 2024

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
Vice Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Murray, Vice Chair Collins, Chairman Cole, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

We, the undersigned, represent 141 civil society organizations *and* businesses alongside two former Commissioners, who led the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) for a combined eight years: four under President Barack Obama, two under President Donald Trump, and two under President Joseph Biden. We write to alert you to an emergent threat to the quality of a critical national economic indicator: the Current Population Survey (CPS). We all rely on this data and are deeply concerned about its future, given its influence on global financial markets and macroeconomic policymaking. Despite its invaluable data, including the monthly unemployment rate, the CPS is under threat of cuts to its sample size due to inadequate resources. To preserve the accuracy and integrity of the monthly unemployment rate and associated measures of labor market activity, as well as enact overdue steps to modernize its data collection, we strongly urge you to provide an additional \$20.6 million above FY 2024 levels for the CPS in any final fiscal year 2025 (FY25) appropriations or continuing resolution for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS-Ed).

Following two years of flat funding, BLS has announced plans to survey fewer households for each month's CPS starting in January 2025. This follows more than a decade of enacting alternative cost-saving measures such as reducing the number of in-person visits to households, non-response follow-up, field training, and more. Since collecting labor market information from fewer people will endanger the reliability of metrics such as national unemployment and labor force participation, this step is a last resort that has been delayed for as long as possible by exhausting all other available means.

The rise in operating costs stems from two factors. First, the cost of in-person data collection has steadily risen over the past decade. This stems from increased labor costs for data collectors, in addition to the need to contact households repeatedly to encourage their participation. The participation rate in the CPS has been steadily falling, and first fell below 90 percent in December 2012. It dropped precipitously in 2020 and was 67 and 71 percent in the past two years, respectively.

Second, and more subtle, costs have increased due to a lack of funding for a reformed and modernized CPS. A decade ago, BLS and the Census Bureau began work to develop new, Internet-based ways to collect data. As described in this recent [presentation to the Federal Economic Statistics Advisory Committee](#), the timeline for modernization can be carried out in just three years contingent on funding. However, for several decades the U.S. has failed to allocate the resources required to implement these modernizing efforts. After adjusting for inflation, overall BLS funding has [fallen by more than 20 percent](#) from a high in 2010 and more than 13 percent since the sample size became approximately 60,000 households in 2001.

Reducing the CPS sample size will make its statistics less reliable. Not only will uncertainty surrounding the top-line statistics edge up, as noted in a [statement from the American Economic Association](#), but it will also hinder accurate analysis of states and local areas and subpopulations, including teenagers, seniors, veterans, people with disabilities, the self-employed, people who identify as Asian, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and Black or African Americans. Furthermore, it would inhibit the analysis of the intersections of these demographics by [geography and sex](#). Already, disaggregated data by state cannot be produced for some racial and ethnic groups. Should cuts to the CPS sample size be enacted, there simply will not be sufficient representation in the sample to trust timely disaggregated findings and information on these demographic groups likely will disappear entirely from the monthly Employment Situation report. And finally, a smaller sample also makes the system less resilient. It raises the risk that BLS will be forced to delay or miss a monthly release because of a major disruption such as extreme weather or another pandemic - moments when accurate, localized labor market information is particularly critical.

Providing BLS with \$718.6 million – \$650.6 million in congressional appropriations (an additional \$20.6 million above FY 2024 levels) and \$68 million which may be expended from the Employment Security Administration account in the Unemployment Trust Fund for FY 2025 – would prevent cuts to the CPS sample size this year, and with continued investment for the following two fiscal years, will save the CPS from further sample erosion. The BLS-Census Bureau plan for a new, modern CPS could be fully implemented in as little as three years and would prevent future cuts to the sample as survey response rates to phone and in-person survey techniques continue to trend downward. The individual components of that funding are broken out as follows:

1. Congress can provide the BLS Division of Employment and Unemployment Statistics with \$12 million dollars in FY2025—an additional \$4.4 million above the President’s request. This increase to annual funding would support the current operations of the CPS.
2. Second, and most importantly, Congress can commit to a multi-year modernization initiative (as proposed in the Administration’s FY2024 budget) to prepare the CPS for success in the 21st Century with an initial appropriation of \$15 million in FY2025 in addition to the above request.

We join together and write today because we know that the immediate problems facing CPS are real, urgent, and can be readily solved with some stop-gap funding. In addition, we know that BLS and Census cannot achieve a healthier CPS without development funding for a modernized labor market survey over the next few years. We urge Congress, with your leadership, to find a bipartisan solution to shore up the CPS now and support its modernization, thereby assuring private and public policymakers that they can confidently base decisions on the invaluable data contained in that survey now and into the future.

Respectfully,



Erica L. Groshen, Ph. D
14th Commissioner of Labor Statistics



William Beach, D. Phil.
15th Commissioner of Labor Statistics

Organization or business name:	State, if not a national organization or business:
Friends of BLS	
A New Hope Consulting	Oregon
Alabama Arise	Alabama
Alaska Public Research Interest Group	Alaska
American Association of University Women	
American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees	
American Institute for Boys and Men	
American Sociological Association	
American Statistical Association	
Asian Americans Advancing Justice AAJC	
Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote (APIAVote)	
Associated General Contractors of America	
Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management (APPAM)	

Association of People Supporting Employment
First (APSE)

Association of Population Centers

Association of Public Data Users

Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN)

Balcony View Consulting, LLC

Better Life Lab at New America

Brookings Institution

Caring Across Generations

Center for American Progress

Center for Economic and Policy Research

Center for NYC Affairs at The New School New York

Center for Parental Leave Leadership

Center for Regional Economic Research,
University of Tennessee at Chattanooga Tennessee

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

Center on Policy Initiatives California

Central American Resource Center - CARECEN Washington DC

Children's Institute Oregon

Coalition on Human Needs

Colorado Fiscal Institute Colorado

Community Service Society of New York New York

Connecticut Voices for Children Connecticut

Consortium of Social Science Associations

Council for Community and Economic Research

Council for Professional Recognition
Council of Professional Associations on Federal
Statistics

Decision Demographics, LLC

Economic Policy Institute

Economic Progress Institute Rhode Island

Equal Rights Advocates & Equal Pay Today

ERA Coalition

Family Values @ Work

First Focus Campaign for Children

Florida Policy Institute Florida

FPWA New York

Grand Canyon Institute Arizona

Greenhouse Institute

Harvard University

Haver Analytics

Hawaii Children's Action Network Hawaii

Hilltop Economics LLC

Idaho Center for Fiscal Policy Idaho

Immigration Research Initiative New York

Impact Fund

Indeed

Indiana Community Action Poverty Institute Indiana

Industry Studies Association

Insights Into Comp, LLC

Institute for Policy Studies, Poverty Project

Institute for Women's Policy Research

Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy

IPUMS

Jewish Women International

Justice for Migrant Women

Kentucky Center for Economic Policy Kentucky

Kentucky Voices for Health Kentucky

Kids Forward Wisconsin

Labor Council for Latin American Advancement
(LCLAA)

Legal Aid at Work California

Legal Momentum, The Women's Legal Defense
and Education Fund

MacroPolicy Perspectives LLC

MACS 2030 - Minnesotans for the American
Community Survey and 2030 Census Minnesota

Main Street Alliance

Maine Center for Economic Policy Maine

Maui Economic Opportunity, Inc. Hawaii

Minnesota Budget Project Minnesota

MomsRising

Motio Research

Movement Advancement Project

National Asian Pacific American Women's
Forum

National Association for Business Economics
(NABE)

National Association for Family Child Care

National Black Worker Center

National Center for Transgender Equality

National Committee on Pay Equity

National Community Action Partnership

National Education Association

National Employment Law Project

National Partnership for Women & Families

National Urban League

National Women's Law Center

NC Budget & Tax Center North Carolina

NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice

New Jersey Policy Perspective New Jersey

New Mexico Voices for Children New Mexico

Noel Collective, LLC Maryland

North Star Policy Action Minnesota

North Yard Analytics LLC

Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness
Foundation Oklahoma

OpenSky Policy Institute Nebraska

Opportunity@Work

Oregon Center for Public Policy Oregon

Oxfam America

PHI

Policy Matters Ohio Ohio

Population Association of America

Population Reference Bureau (PRB)

PowHer New York New York

Project on Government Oversight

Regionomics LLC Ohio

Research 2 Impact

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Rhode Island

RuralOrganizing.org

South Carolina Program for Infant/Toddler Care South Carolina

SRR Consulting

Start Early

Storied Analytics, LLC

The Budget Lab at Yale

The Burning Glass Institute

The Consortium of Social Science Associations

The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights

The Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD)

The Stat Guy LLC Colorado

The W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research

Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund (TLDEF)

Twin Cities Research Group	Minnesota
UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Institute	
Union for Reform Judaism	
VOICES for Alabama's Children	Alabama
Washington Center for Equitable Growth	
Washington State Budget and Policy Center	Washington
West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy	West Virginia
Whitman-Walker Institute	
Women Employed	Illinois
Working Partnerships USA	California
Workplace Justice Project	Louisiana
Young Invincibles	Both state and national
YWCA USA	

Cc The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Chair, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies

The Honorable Shelley Capito
Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Ranking Member, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies