



AMERICAN STATISTICAL ASSOCIATION

Promoting the Practice and Profession of Statistics®

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November 30, 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 Senators Alexander and Murray,

As president of the American Statistical Association (ASA), I am pleased to offer the ASA's support of the nomination of Dr. William Beach for Commissioner of the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).

In May of this year, the ASA joined with 19 other organizations on a letter to President Trump urging swift appointment of a BLS commissioner with credentials that include strong management experience, economic and statistical skills, extensive engagement with the federal statistical agencies, and a high degree of familiarity with BLS. This requires an understanding of its products and broader relevance and visibility in the statistical community, including a thorough understanding of the National Academies' *Principles and Practices for a Federal Statistical Agency*. It also requires an ability to interact effectively with both Congress and senior Department of Labor staff. We reiterated these requirements in an August letter with many other organizations to Secretary Acosta.

We're pleased to see that Dr. Beach meets these criteria and we fully support his nomination to head this very important agency.

Allow me to emphasize the vital role of the BLS, the country's second largest federal statistical agency and a major producer of the nation's primary economic indicators. Indeed, countless businesses, communities, students, and government policy makers rely on the accuracy, objectivity, and timeliness of statistical information from the BLS. Its critically important products include:

- Jobs outlook, upon which employers, job seekers, and students base their training, participation, and other labor market decisions;
- Consumer Price Index, which tracks inflation and informs monetary policy;

- Employment and unemployment rates at the national, state and local levels, which serve as the most timely and accurate indicators of economic activity;
- Measures of productivity that gauge our nation's economic performance; and
- Monthly data on changes in the prices of imported and exported goods traded between the U.S. and the rest of the world, which help track trends in international competitiveness.

Because it is imperative that BLS has the resources to do its job effectively and efficiently, allow me to also take the opportunity to note it is imperative that BLS has the resources to do its job effectively and efficiently. We are very concerned the BLS has been flat funded since fiscal year 2010, resulting in a 14% cut to its purchasing power due to inflation. We ask that you work to ensure that BLS funding returns to levels sufficient to cover its varied and vital statistical programs.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Barry D. Nussbaum". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "B".

Barry D. Nussbaum
President, American Statistical Association

Cc: Members of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions