Dear Chairman Serrano, Ranking Member Aderholt, Chairman Moran, and Ranking Member Shaheen,

We the undersigned organizations write to thank your subcommittees for the strong support of the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) in the House and Senate FY20 Commerce, Justice, Science appropriations bills. We also convey our strong support for an enacted level of at least $107 million for the FY20 budget of the BEA.

While a relatively small agency, BEA is enormously important to understanding our multi-trillion-dollar economy. BEA’s National Income and Product Accounts provide an overall picture of the economic health of our economy as well as an essential sector-by-sector and geographic report. Its data are used by federal, state and local government to inform economic and fiscal policy and to spur economic growth and job creation. BEA data also play a vital role in guiding business and investment decisions in the private sector. Scientists use BEA data to inform their research on the implications of changes in the economy and how these changes affect individuals and communities. The data provided by BEA, essential as it is to both public and private decisions, are not available from any other source. We believe the extraordinary return on investment provided by the BEA thoroughly justifies a budget of at least $107 million in FY20.

This amount for BEA would allow it to undertake several important initiatives, including those in your bills’ reports. The administration’s request also proposes to develop a data service framework to promote evidence-based policymaking as required by the newly enacted Foundations of Evidence-Based Policymaking Act. The requested additional funding would support government-wide data access and sharing, improve cross-agency data discovery and utilization, and enhance privacy and confidentiality practices. The administration’s request would also support the Advisory Committee on Data for Evidence Building, which will make recommendations to the Office of Management and Budget on how to promote the use of
Federal data for evidence building. The administration’s requested amount would also allow BEA to improve existing statistics and faster development of new data products, a critical step in BEA’s longer-term plan to accelerate the publication of GDP by industry and GDP by state statistics. Lastly, the proposed amount would support the Administration’s proposal to reorganize the Bureau of Labor Statistics alongside the Census Bureau and BEA within the Department of Commerce.

In short, we believe at least $107 million for the BEA is an essential investment for promoting economic growth and job creation. Just as our economy is constantly changing, BEA is constantly improving its methods to adjust to our dynamic economy. This investment in our information infrastructure—small relative to our multi-trillion-dollar economy which it tracks—allows BEA to keep up with the changes in our economy and will repay the public many times over.

Thank you for your consideration.

American Association for Public Opinion Research  Center for Data Innovation
American Planning Association  Consortium of Social Science Associations
American Sociological Association  Council for Community and Economic Research
American Statistical Association  Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics
Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management  Economic History Association
Association for University Business & Economic Research  Industry Studies Association
Association of Academic Survey Research Organizations  National Association for Business Economics
Association of Population Centers  Outdoor Industry Association
Association of Public Data Users  Population Association of America
State International Development Organizations
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

The staff contact for this letter is Steve Pierson, Director of Science Policy for the American Statistical Association (pierson@amstat.org; 703.302.1841.)