AMERICAN STATISTICAL ASSOCIATION
Promoting the Practice and Profession of Statistics®

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July 15, 2021

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chair, Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and
Related Agencies (Labor-HHS-Education)
Chair, Appropriations Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair DeLauro,

Thank you for your strong support in the FY22 Labor-HHS-Education bill for the US data infrastructure that undergirds our economy, workforce, health, and education. Specifically, we are grateful for and commend the FY22 marks for the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), and National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) along with the associated report language. We also appreciate the wise investments in the National Institutes of Health and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality that will serve country's health so well for years to come.

The BLS funding level will help the agency improve its programs monitoring and reporting our nation's workforce, work conditions, productivity, and inflation. For example, it will be able to better track the effect of such advances as the gig economy, AI, robotics, and automation on our economy and workforce. As you know, the BLS has also been hit by purchasing power loss over the last decade, as shown in a figure below. The report language on the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth and on the Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (JOLTS) shows your commitment to evidence-based approaches to improving our nation's workforce and economy and a deep understanding of the role of these programs.

For NCES, the additional funding for the agency and especially the statistics line, will help improve the timeliness and extent of its widely used programs. The NCES statistics has lost 15% in purchasing power since FY10 which, along with staffing constraints, has led to program cuts and cutbacks. Because of these reductions, we're also grateful for the report language requiring the department to address the NCES staffing crisis. See the figures below showing NCES's loss of purchasing power for statistics and NCES' much higher budget-to-staffing ratio than other statistical agencies. The staffing constraints means a heavy reliance on contractors which was reported in June to be 875 FTE contractors compared to 95 NCES employees.

Additional funding for NCHS will be put to immediate and effective use to improve health statistics broadly while also providing the agency critical funds to maintain current programs. As you know, NCHS has lost 14 percent in purchasing power since FY10, making it challenging for it to buttress and improve current programs. The figure below illustrates this loss of purchasing power. Your committee's mark will help NCHS immensely to increase the timeliness and geographical detail of its products and develop new products that will help our country better track, and therefore address issues in, health, healthcare, and insurance. We also applaud the language for NCHS to be fully integrated in the Data Modernization Initiative (DMI). As a critical part of the CDC's data infrastructure, NCHS would benefit immensely from DMI funds. Further, the CDC tapping NCHS' considerable expertise would also benefit DMI overall.

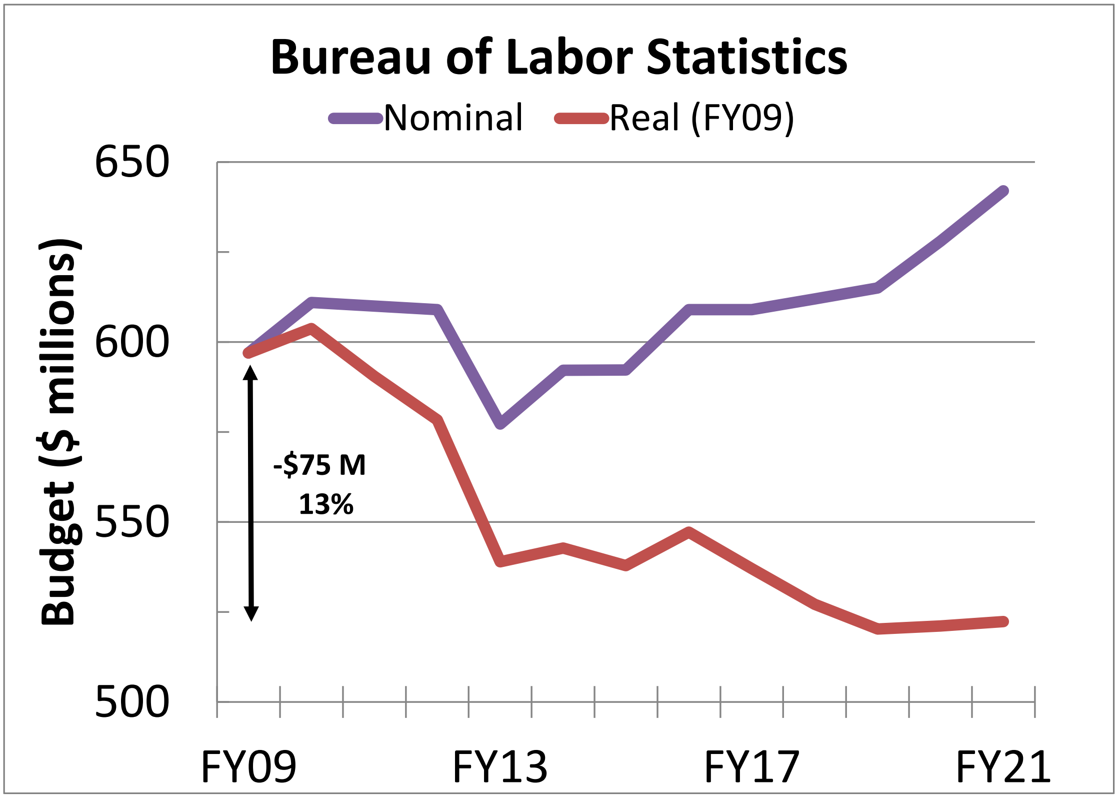
We appreciate your leadership and will be strongly advocating for these levels in the enacted bill.

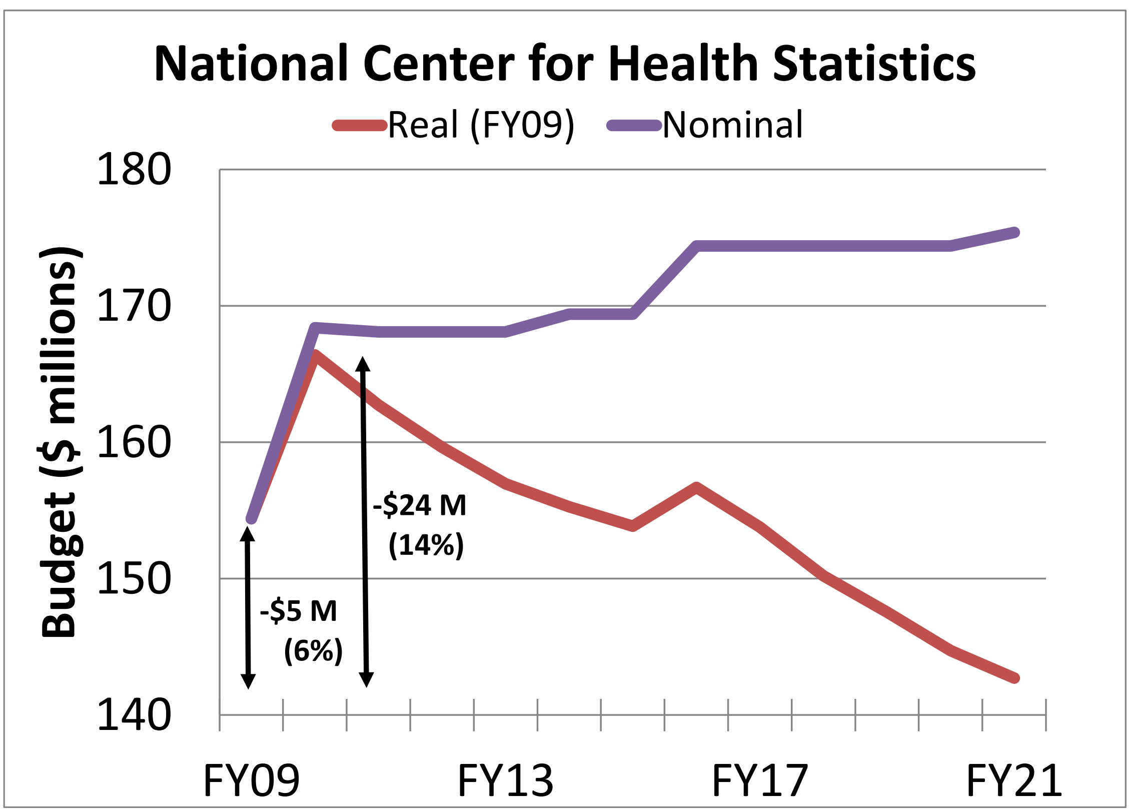
Sincerely,

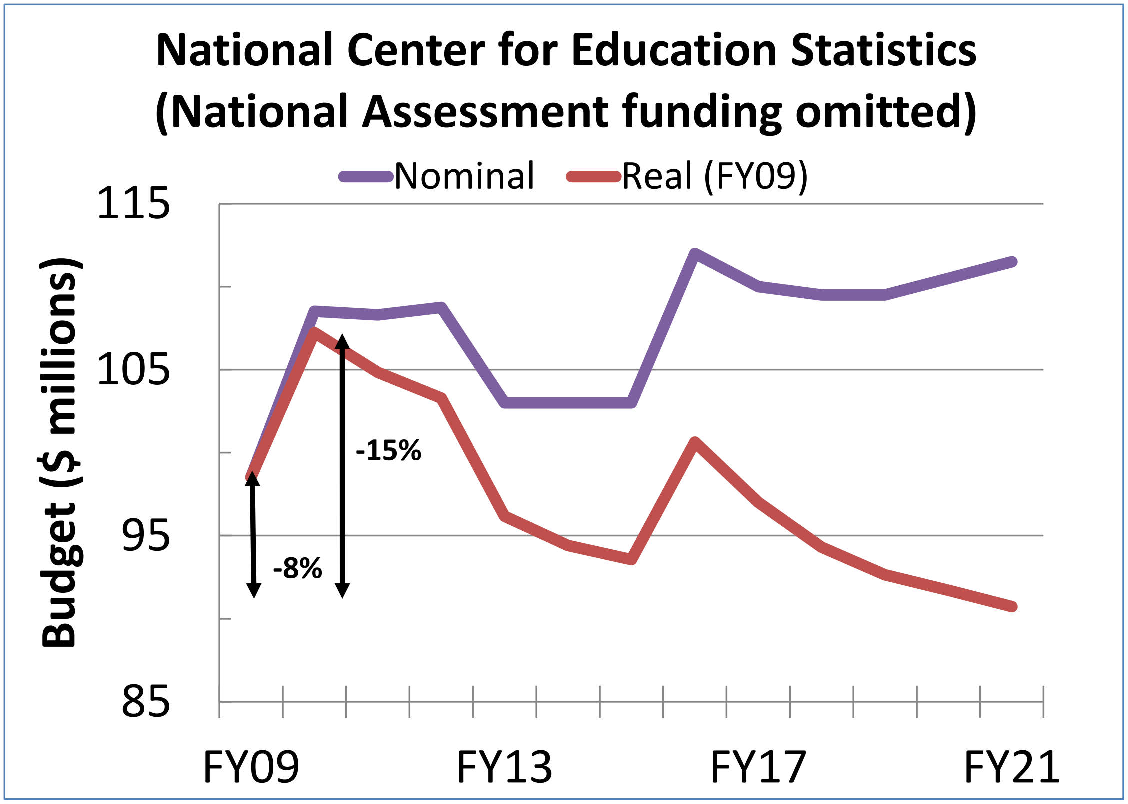
Ron Wasserstein

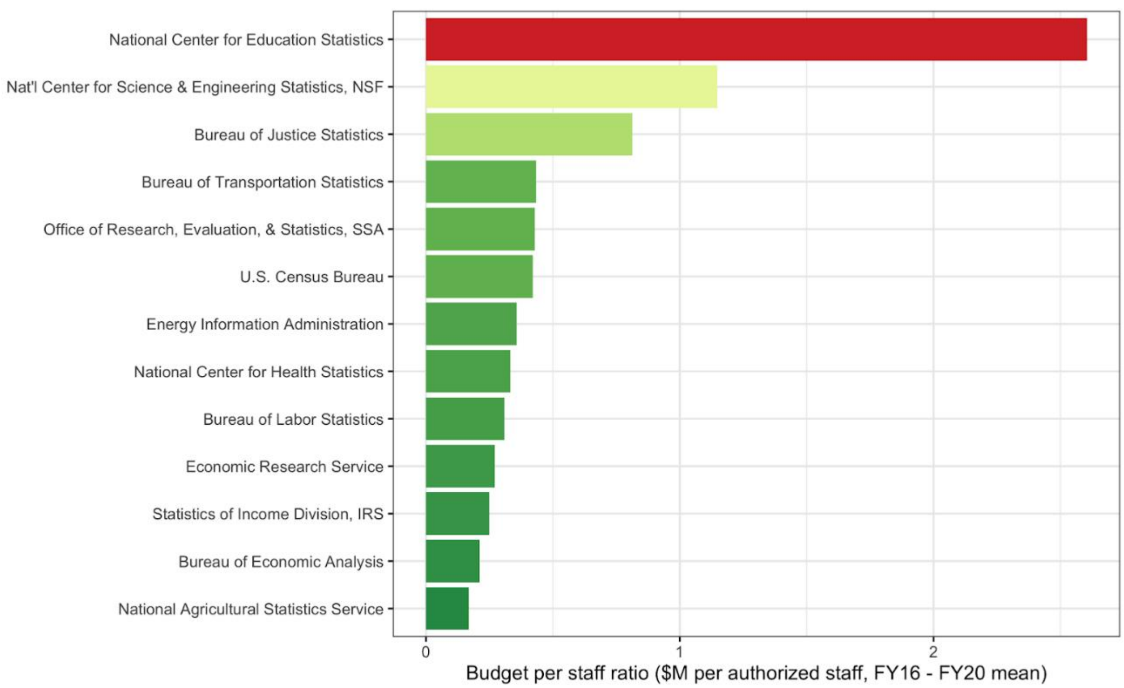
Ron Wasserstein
Executive Director

CC: Members of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies


Bureau of Labor Statistics
Nominal
Real (FY09)
Budget ($ millions)
650
600
550
500
-$75 M
13%
FY09
FY13
FY17
FY21


National Center for Health Statistics
Real (FY09)
Nominal
Budget ($ millions)
180
170
160
150
140
-$24 M
(14%)
-$5 M
(6%)
FY09
FY13
FY17
FY21


National Center for Education Statistics
(National Assessment funding omitted)
Nominal
Real (FY09)
115
105
95
85
Budget ($ millions)
-15%
-8%
FY09
FY13
FY17
FY21


National Center for Education Statistics
Nat'l Center for Science & Engineering Statistics, NSF
Bureau of Justice Statistics
Bureau of Transportation Statistics
Office of Research, Evaluation, & Statistics, SSA
U.S. Census Bureau
Energy Information Administration
National Center for Health Statistics
Bureau of Labor Statistics
Economic Research Service
Statistics of Income Division, IRS
Bureau of Economic Analysis
National Agricultural Statistics Service
0
1
2
Budget per staff ratio ($M per authorized staff, FY16 - FY20 mean)