

May 7, 2018

The Honorable Carlos J. Méndez Nuñez
Speaker of the House of Representatives of Puerto Rico
The Capitol of Puerto Rico
PO Box 9022228
San Juan, PR 00902-2228

Dear Speaker Méndez Nuñez,

We, the undersigned organizations, write to respectfully urge you to keep Puerto Rico's statistical agency, El Instituto de Estadísticas de Puerto Rico (Puerto Rico Institute of Statistics, PRIS), and its board of directors fully independent.

At this critical historical juncture, Puerto Rico needs accurate, objective, and timely statistics. Government statistics empower the economy, serve the health and welfare of citizens, improve governance, and inform decisions and policies in the public and private sectors, among many other vital functions. Government statistics are also fundamental to evidence-based policymaking, the engagement of which is on a rapid rise in local, state, and federal governments. To address the challenges posed by its decade-long economic recession and the devastation of back-to-back hurricanes, Puerto Rico must chart its path toward sustainable recovery using reputable and reliable data and statistical methods.

Because of their broad and profound importance, it is imperative that government statistics be produced through rigorous scientific processes and analyses performed by experts that can function free of outside influence. Government statistics must be independent, objective, accurate, and timely and be perceived as such. PRIS has demonstrated repeatedly it has the expertise to function independently and produce rigorous, objective, and accurate statistics for the benefit of Puerto Rico and its people.

The alternative to objective and accurate statistical data to inform decisions is reliance on judgement, which of course can differ widely by individual and one's perspective. However, in a highly regarded study on the topic of expert judgement versus a relatively statistical approach, the latter was found to be more reliable.¹

Lastly, we draw your attention again to the petition now signed by 3,000 individuals—and still growing—urging a strong and independent PRIS.²

Thank you for your consideration.

¹ <https://hbr.org/2015/02/what-research-tells-us-about-making-accurate-predictions>

² <https://www.change.org/p/puerto-rico-legislature-and-governor-ricardo-rosselló-put-the-facts-first-governor-rosselló-for-a-better-puerto-rico>

500 Women Scientists

American Anthropological Association
American Association for the Advancement of Science
American Association of Geographers
American Educational Research Association
American Geophysical Union
American Institute of Biological Sciences
American Phytopathological Society
American Political Science Association
American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
American Society for Cell Biology
American Society of Hispanic Economists
American Sociological Association
American Statistical Association
Applied Demography Program, Pennsylvania State University
Asociación Latinoamericana de Población
Association of Population Centers
Association of Public Data Users
Center for Open Science
Ciencia Puerto Rico
Consortium of Social Science Associations
Council for Community and Economic Research
Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics
Future of Research
Inter American Statistical Institute
International Association for Official Statistics
International Statistical Institute
Latin American Observatory of Population Censuses
March for Science Puerto Rico
McDougall Scientific Ltd.
National Association for Business Economics
National Statistical Institute
New Zealand Statistical Association
Population Association of America
Population Specialty Group, American Association of Geographers
Puerto Rico Association of Economists
Puerto Rico Chapter of the American Statistical Association
Puerto Rico Society of Microbiologists, American Society for Microbiology - Local Branch
Rescuing Biomedical Research
Royal Statistical Society
Sense About Science USA
SocArXiv: Open Archive for the Social Sciences
Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS)
Society for Research in Child Development
Society for the Study of Evolution

Statistical Society of Australia
Statistical Society of Canada / Société Statistique du Canada
The International Environmetrics Society
Union of Concerned Scientists

Identical versions of this letter were sent to The Honorable Thomas Rivera Schatz and The Honorable Ricardo Rosselló. Contact for this letter is American Statistical Association Director of Science Policy Steve Pierson: pierson@amstat.org.