

May 7, 2018

The Honorable Thomas Rivera Schatz
President of the Senate of Puerto Rico
The Capitol of Puerto Rico
PO Box 9023431
San Juan, PR 00902-3431

Dear President Rivera Schatz,

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 Carlos J. Méndez Nuñez and The Honorable Ricardo Rosselló. Contact for this letter is American Statistical Association Director of Science Policy Steve Pierson: pierson@amstat.org.