

American Statistical Association Written Public Testimony for the House Committee on
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and
Related Agencies

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Distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to address this issue on the critical importance of the vital continuation of education, health, and labor statistics for the United States.

To ensure the United States thrives economically in the 21st century, we require an agile, healthy, and educated workforce, coupled with a deep understanding of jobs and workforce dynamics. These goals require the production of relevant and timely education, health, and labor statistics. Indeed, the higher the quality and granularity of these statistics, the greater the competitive advantage for the United States.

As detailed in the July 2024 report led by the American Statistical Association (<https://bit.ly/NationsDataAtRisk>), the agencies responsible for producing these critical data—the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the National Center for Education Statistics, and the National Center for Health Statistics—have been facing significant challenges. Since January, the NCES has been shuttered through the termination of nearly all staff and the cancellation of vital contracts essential for data collection. The challenges for BLS and NCHS have also intensified through staff loss and uncertain budgets. If left unaddressed, these challenges will impede the agencies' abilities to maintain the current pace of producing relevant and timely statistics.

The BLS provides crucial insights into employment trends, wage growth, and inflation, informing economic policy and business decisions. The NCHS monitors the health and healthcare of our population, providing data critical for public health initiatives and healthcare planning including mortality statistics on opioids, and surveys our individual level health, examination and provider situation. Additionally, NCES provides essential data on educational attainment, student performance, and school resources, informing educational policy and resource allocation.

The NCES termination leaves a gaping hole in our understanding of the state of education in the United States. Without NCES products, for example, states will be unable to take credit for their own progress and benchmark that progress among other similar states.

More generally, without reliable and timely statistics, policymakers will be hamstrung to make informed decisions regarding economic stimulus, healthcare reform, and education funding. Businesses will lack the data needed to effectively plan for workforce needs and adapt to changing market conditions. And researchers will be unable to accurately assess the impact of social and economic policies.

The loss of these critical data streams, and the associated loss of economies of scale and scope, will diminish our nation's competitive advantage in the global economy. In a world driven by data-driven decision-making, the United States cannot afford to operate with incomplete or outdated information.

Therefore, I respectfully urge you to:

1. **Fund** BLS, NCHS, and NCES at levels to ensure they have the resources necessary to fulfill their vital missions and meet the challenges outlined in our July 2024 report (<https://bit.ly/NationsDataAtRisk>.)
2. **Restore staffing** levels at these agencies, recognizing the critical role of skilled professionals in data collection and analysis.
3. **Reinstate vital data collection activities** at NCES with subject matter expertise and experience to ensure the continued production of essential education statistics.
4. **Invest in modernizing data infrastructure** to enhance the efficiency, integration, and accessibility of these critical data resources.
5. **Promote interagency collaboration** to facilitate the integrated analysis of education, health, and labor data, leveraging the inherent economies of scope.

By investing in the infrastructure of our statistical agencies and recognizing the vital role of economies of scale and scope, we are investing in the future of our nation. We are ensuring that the United States remains a leader in innovation, economic prosperity, and social progress. Thank you for your consideration.