September 24, 2025

The Honorable Bill Cassidy
Chair, Senate Committee on Health,
    Education, Labor, and Pensions
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on
    Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Cassidy and Ranking Member Sanders,

As the executive director of the American Statistical Association, I write to urge your scrutiny of the qualifications, track record, and public statements of the nominee to be commissioner of the Bureau of Labor Statistics. While such scrutiny is always warranted and is your committee's practice, the BLS is at a critical juncture following the August 1 firing of Commissioner Erika McEntarfer, the associated attacks on the agency's leadership and staff, and the baseless accusations of rigging the numbers. To meet this defining moment and ensure BLS can continue to produce trusted, quality statistics, it is imperative that a commissioner has:

I. Deep expertise and experience in economic statistics
II. The leadership skills and commitment to public service necessary to steer the agency as it navigates the current challenges
III. The professional trust of the BLS employees and other members of the federal statistical system
IV. Familiarity with the design, operations, and administration of large-scale surveys

The Bureau of Labor Statistics, and the larger US federal statistical system of which it is part, is a cornerstone of American democracy and its free market economic system. US federal economic statistics affect markets and help everyday Americans make decisions about their jobs, businesses, and investments. Other nations model their government statistics programs after ours. Moreover, there is no adequate private sector alternative for the BLS economic statistics. In fact, most private sector estimates weight and/or validate their data products using federal statistics.

Without high-quality economic statistics, decision-makers throughout the US economy will be flying blind. Monetary and fiscal forecasts would require more guesswork. Businesses won't know whether to invest in new plants, hire new staff, sign long-term contracts, or take out new loans. Federal and state government programs designed to support businesses, students, and local communities won't have the information about supply and demand required to connect business needs to education and training programs. BLS, along with the Bureau of Economic Analysis and the US Census Bureau, is the primary provider of the timely and critical information guiding all this economic activity.

The mission of the federal statistical agencies is to produce high-quality official statistics. To deal with the inherent tension between timeliness and accuracy of the statistics, the federal statistical system developed a data quality framework in recent years that explicitly recognizes there are trade-offs among timeliness, precision, and other factors. Economic statistical agencies such as BLS have led the way in prioritizing timeliness, as called for by their stakeholders, by explicitly using a monthly release and regularly scheduled revision process. The timeliest statistics rely on data collected in a compressed timeframe; as such, revisions are necessary to incorporate data from late respondents. To criticize the revision process is to encourage less timely data.

By default, BLS and other US statistical units currently rely too heavily on increasingly fragile household and business surveys. Worldwide, surveys are becoming more fragile because households and businesses are participating less. The shift to modernize statistics to incorporate more non-survey sources has been slowed by inadequate funding and the desire to avoid 'breaking' long-standing time series. For example, more funding would allow the purchase and research needed to see how high-quality alternative (private sector) data could augment or enhance surveys. Most recently, the staffing, budget, and contracting cuts of 2025—combined with larger disruptions across the federal government, including partners at other statistical agencies—have further deprioritized modernization.

BLS needs a leader who fully understands the current challenges and opportunities facing the federal statistical programs, and who has strong strategies—grounded in science—to address them. A leader must understand the regulation, Fundamental Responsibilities of Recognized Statistical Agencies and Units, which is required by law and designed to ensure the trust of the American public. The first such responsibility is relevance and timeliness. To carry that out requires trusted relationships with the primary communities who need BLS data: federal and state policy and program leaders; business economists; and more. The leader needs to know how to work closely with other federal statistical leaders, especially given the high reliance of BLS on the US Census Bureau and of the Bureau of Economic Analysis on BLS. The task of

producing high-quality economic statistics, especially at this moment of major methodological transition, is complex. The BLS leader needs to respect and listen to experts within the agency and its state partners, too.
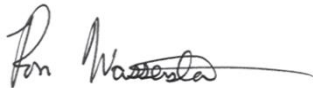
Past political incursions at BLS during the Nixon administration occasioned federal policy changes that prioritize transparency and accountability, especially in principal economic indicators. Those policies came to be embodied in law through the [Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act](#), signed by President Trump in 2019. One of those accountability measures was regular testimony to Congress by the BLS commissioner, which has not happened consistently for many years.

Given these high stakes, BLS will struggle to meet the current challenges and carry out its fundamental responsibilities under a leader who lacks the qualifications described herein. On the other hand, a leader with the requisite qualifications will rise to meet this defining moment. I therefore call upon you to scrutinize the nominee for 17th commissioner of the BLS and for Congress to carry out vigorous, bipartisan oversight of BLS and the federal statistical system.

The ASA is not alone on this stance; we recommend you that review this [statement by the Friends of BLS](#).

Independent, non-partisan statistics are expected by the American people. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ron Wasserstein, PhD
Executive Director

CC: Members of the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions