

American Statistical Association Written Public Testimony for  
U.S. 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 the critical importance of continuing funding for education, health, labor statistics, and biomedical research in the United States.

To ensure the sustained economic prosperity of the United States in the 21st century, a resilient, healthy, and well-educated workforce is indispensable, complemented by a comprehensive understanding of labor market dynamics and occupational trends. The realization of these objectives necessitates the consistent generation of pertinent and timely statistical information about education, health, and labor. Indeed, the enhanced quality and granularity of these statistical resources directly correlate with an augmented competitive advantage for the United States—a global standard that warrants diligent preservation.

For over a century, the statistical outputs of the United States federal government have established international benchmarks, characterized by exceptional levels of detail, timeliness, objectivity, and reliability, achieved at a relatively judicious cost. Our economic statistics provide a tangible competitive advantage. The capacity of businesses to analyze expanding manufacturing sectors or the escalating demand for software engineers facilitates more informed investment decisions. Similarly, the availability of data on sought-after skills enables workers to direct their training strategically. These public resources not only serve private-sector interests but also inform critical policy deliberations in both Congress and the Executive Branch.

However, as delineated in the December 2025 report issued under the auspices of the American Statistical Association (<https://bit.ly/NationsDataAtRisk2025>), the governmental entities responsible for the production of these critical data—namely, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), and the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS)—are confronting significant operational challenges that have been long in the making but intensified significantly over the past 15 months. Since January of 2025, the NCES has lost much of its functional capacity due to the termination of a substantial proportion of its personnel and the abrogation of essential contracts vital for data acquisition. While we are grateful that Congress has shown bipartisan interest in restoring NCES, the agency's ability to fulfill its statutory mandates is in question due to the 2025 workforce reductions. The BLS and NCHS are also experiencing heightened difficulties stemming from staff attrition and budgetary constraints. Should these challenges persist without remediation, the capacity of these agencies to maintain the current tempo of producing relevant and timely statistics will be demonstrably impeded.

Just as the health of our bodies is important, so is the health of our economic system. The BLS furnishes crucial insights into employment trends, wage growth, and inflationary pressures, thereby informing economic policy formulation and business strategies. The NCHS monitors the health status and healthcare utilization of our

populace, providing critical data for public health initiatives and healthcare planning, including mortality statistics related to opioid use and surveys that encompass individual health metrics, medical examinations, and interactions with healthcare providers. Furthermore, the NCES provides essential data on educational attainment, student performance, and school resource allocation, thereby informing educational policy and resource distribution.

The cessation of operations at the NCES creates a significant gap in our understanding of the condition of education within the United States. Absent NCES data products, for instance, individual states will be unable to accurately assess their educational progress and benchmark their performance against comparable jurisdictions at previously achieved levels.

More generally, the absence of reliable and timely statistical information will significantly constrain policymakers' ability to make informed decisions on economic stimulus measures, healthcare reform initiatives, and the allocation of educational funding. Businesses will be deprived of the requisite data for effective workforce planning and adaptation to evolving market dynamics. Moreover, researchers will be unable to conduct accurate assessments of the impact of social and economic policies.

The loss of these indispensable data streams will erode our nation's competitive advantage in the global economy. In an increasingly data-driven global environment, 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 December 2025 report (<https://bit.ly/NationsDataAtRisk2025>)
2. **Ensure adequate NCES staffing levels to support vital data collection activities** at NCES with subject matter expertise and experience to ensure the continued production of essential education statistics, which will require NCES to significantly increase the staff levels from its current value of 11. The current status of NCES studies and projects is available [here](#).
3. **Invest in modernizing data infrastructure** to enhance the efficiency, integration, and accessibility of these critical data resources.
4. **Provide funding flexibility:** Allow agencies to use appropriated funds, or some portion thereof, until expended (similar to the FY26 language for the Energy Information Administration<sup>1</sup>). This flexibility ensures operational continuity during shutdowns and provides the flexibility needed for multi-year innovation and modernization projects.
5. **Exempt Statistical Staff from Schedule P/C:** Stipulate in FY27 appropriations that employees of federal statistical agencies and units be exempted from "Schedule Policy/Career" classifications, as requested in the multi-organization letter dated February 17, 2026 (<https://www.amstat.org/docs/default-source/amstat-documents/pol-schedule-policy-career.pdf>).

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.congress.gov/119/plaws/publ74/PLAW-119publ74.pdf>, p. 73.

Relatedly, thank you for the strong support of the National Institutes of Health in the FY26 budget. I respectfully request continued support for FY27. Medical research is key to making Americans healthier by improving understanding of disease, treatment, and public health. It also trains the workforce that will continue that research for the next several decades. Lack of adequate funding undermines the infrastructure and talent that have enabled the many strides benefiting us so tremendously.

By investing in biomedical research and the infrastructure of our statistical agencies, we are ensuring that the United States remains a leader in innovation, economic prosperity, and social progress.

Thank you for your consideration.