

April 25, 2012

The Honorable Hilda Solis  
Secretary of Labor  
U.S. Department of Labor  
Frances Perkins Building  
200 Connecticut Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Secretary Solis:

The undersigned organizations are writing to thank you for the recent Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) decision to restore funding for the National Longitudinal Survey (NLS) program. We are pleased that the previously scheduled data collection for both the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 (NLSY79) and the “NLSY97” cohorts will continue.

The proposed cut in FY 2012 funding would have resulted in devastating erosion to the viability of the NLS and immediate cessation of field activities. The scientific and research communities were extremely concerned that this reduction in funding was coupled with plans to move the NLS to a triennial data collection. This action would have significantly reduced the reliability of the data and jeopardized the future of this national data resource.

The NLS is among the most widely-used data sets in the Federal Statistical System, particularly for issues of wages, earnings, employment, unemployment, and careers. For more than three decades, the NLS has been one of the richest sources of information related to youth labor market trends and is distinctive in that it focuses on the employment and unemployment experience, including initiation into the job market, skills that contribute to job success, periods of unemployment, and academic or military experiences.

At this time of economic change, it is essential that we have uninterrupted access to the longitudinal data collected by the NLS. Both the NLSY79 and the NLSY97 garner response rates of 80% or higher and provide invaluable employment, economic, health, housing, education, joblessness, and other information to approximately 7,000 researchers in the public, private, academic, and non-profit sectors, resulting in more than 5,000 academic articles, papers, and books. The loss of this information would have had an adverse impact on Congress and other policymakers, analysts, researchers, students, and the media.

We thank you for recognizing that we cannot afford to lose this precious national resource at such a critical time in our nation’s economic history. We appreciate your leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely,

American Statistical Association  
Association of Population Centers  
Center for Law and Social Policy  
Consortium of Social Science Associations  
Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics  
March of Dimes  
National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health  
National Employment Law Project  
National Partnership for Women & Families  
Population Association of America