



AMERICAN STATISTICAL ASSOCIATION
Promoting the Practice and Profession of Statistics®

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January 7, 2019

Mr. Arnaldo Cruz
Chair, Board of Directors
Instituto de Estadísticas de Puerto Rico (Puerto Rico Institute of Statistics; PRIS)
P.O. BOX 195484
San Juan, PR 00919-5484
aacruzpr@gmail.com

Dear Mr. Cruz,

As executive director of the American Statistical Association (ASA), I write to express our deep concern about the appointments made by Governor Ricardo Rosselló to the board of directors of the Instituto de Estadísticas de Puerto Rico (Puerto Rico Institute of Statistics; PRIS) in November 2018. These appointments do not appear to adhere to PRIS' organic law and thus undermine the function and independence of PRIS. We ask you to use your authority and position as chair of PRIS' board of directors to ensure the integrity of the board is maintained by following the requisites established by law. This will in turn ensure that PRIS remains a strong and independent statistical agency.

As the ASA has previously written, 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.

As you know, the PRIS law has specific requirements for the composition of the board of directors.¹ PRIS' law requires six members of the board to have recognized professional integrity, objectivity, and competence in statistics, economics, or planning. For reference, according to the ASA's guidelines for

¹ <http://www.estadisticas.gobierno.pr/iepr/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=2UcrjIXfc7A%3D&tabid=277&mid=244884>; p. 10.

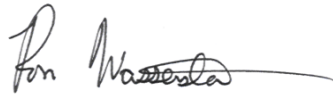
professional accreditation,² competence in statistics assumes an advanced degree in “statistics or a related quantitative field with sufficient concentration in statistics.” Also, only one member of the board can be a government official. We understand one of the newly appointed members (Harry Santiago, CPA) lacks the specified credentials while another (Manuel Laboy, secretary of Economic Development and Commerce) is a government official, which exceeds the limit of one.

Our concern is framed by the governor’s past actions that would have undermined PRIS. In early 2018, Governor Rosselló proposed dismantling PRIS by consolidating it into the Department of Economic Development and Commerce, removing its independence protections, and outsourcing its statistical research. That plan followed the governor’s illegal removal of four PRIS board members in 2017.

Once again, we ask you to use your influence as chair of the board of directors to ensure the PRIS law is followed. Strict adherence to the PRIS law is not only meant to ensure the agency’s autonomy and independence, but help preserve the credibility PRIS enjoys at the local, federal, and international levels. We would welcome your input for how the ASA can continue to be an advocate for an independent and strong PRIS. As the world’s largest community of statisticians, the American Statistical Association can prove invaluable in assisting PRIS accomplish their evidence-based endeavors.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Ron Wasserstein

Executive Director, American Statistical Association

CC: The Honorable Ricardo Rosselló, Governor, Puerto Rico

² <https://www.amstat.org/asa/files/pdfs/accreditation/Guidelines.pdf>