

American Statistical Association Written Public Testimony for  
U.S. Senate 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 the continuation of education, health, and labor statistics and biomedical research funding for 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 pertaining to 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 strategically direct their training endeavors. These public resources not only serve private sector interests but also inform critical policy deliberations within both the Congress and the Executive Branch.

However, as delineated in the July 2024 report issued under the auspices of the American Statistical Association (<https://bit.ly/NationsDataAtRisk>), 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<sup>1</sup> confronting significant operational challenges. Since January, the NCES has effectively ceased its functional capacity due to the termination of a substantial proportion of its personnel and the abrogation of essential contracts vital for data acquisition. The BLS and NCHS are also experiencing heightened difficulties stemming from staff attrition and budgetary uncertainties. 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, the health of our economic system is equally important. The BLS

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<sup>1</sup> [amstat.org](https://amstat.org)

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 data of critical importance for public health initiatives and healthcare planning, including mortality statistics related to opioid use and surveys encompassing individual health metrics, medical examinations, and interactions with healthcare providers. Furthermore, the NCES provides essential data pertaining to educational attainment, student performance, and the allocation of school resources, thus 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 the data products of the NCES, for instance, individual states will be unable to accurately assess their educational progress and benchmark their performance against comparable jurisdictions to levels achieved previously.

More generally, the absence of reliable and timely statistical information will significantly constrain the ability of policymakers to make informed decisions concerning 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 within the global economic landscape. 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 July 2024 report (<https://bit.ly/NationsDataAtRisk>.)
2. **Lift hiring freezes** 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.

Relatedly, I urge you to sustain investments in the National Institutes of Health. Support for medical research makes Americans healthier through a better understanding of disease, treatment, and public health. It also trains the workforce who will continue that research for the next several decades. The proposed cuts for FY26 would undermine the infrastructure and talent that have realized the many strides that have benefitted 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.