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August 13, 2026

The Honorable Tim Walberg  
Chair  
Committee on Education and Workforce  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2175 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Walberg:

I write to request that you schedule a hearing to examine the impact of funding cuts and declining staff at federal statistical agencies within the Committee's jurisdiction, including the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service (ERS), the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), and the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS or the Bureau).

These agencies serve as vital lifelines for policymakers, businesses, and the public—producing nonpartisan, reliable statistics describing the realities confronting our constituents every day. Given the underfunding and understaffing at these agencies recently highlighted in an alarming report from the American Statistical Association,<sup>1</sup> Committee Members should have the opportunity to explore the hard choices these agencies have had to face as they absorb these cuts and do more with less.

The BLS is charged with “produc[ing] objective, quality measures and analyses of labor market activity, working conditions, price changes, and productivity in the U.S. economy to support public and private decision making.”<sup>2</sup> In recent years, tight budgets have stymied attempts to modernize the Bureau's data products and surveys,<sup>3</sup> and underinvestment has tied the hands of

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<sup>1</sup> 2026 Midyear Update: Resources and Leadership Supporting Federal Statistics, Am. Stat. Ass'n (July 28, 2026), [https://www.amstat.org/docs/default-source/amstat-documents/FedStatHealth\\_MidYearUpdate.pdf](https://www.amstat.org/docs/default-source/amstat-documents/FedStatHealth_MidYearUpdate.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> *About the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics*, U.S. Bureau of Lab. Stats., <https://www.bls.gov/bls/about-bls.htm> (last visited July 29, 2026).

<sup>3</sup> Sara Estep and Kyle Ross, *The Next Bureau of Labor Statistics Commissioner Must Restore Trust in the Agency While Managing Fiscal Constraints*, Center for Am. Progress (Oct. 7, 2025), <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-next-bureau-of-labor-statistics-commissioner-must-restore-trust-in-the-agency-while-managing-fiscal-constraints/>.

the BLS as it has consistently seen falling response rates, hitting a record-low response rate of 63.9 percent in March of 2026.<sup>4</sup> As our nation’s principal source of information on the conditions of workers and the labor force, the BLS regularly produces nonpartisan, reliable data on wages, employment, prices, and labor market trends. However, the Bureau has seen a more than 20 percent decline in staffing since Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24), and the Bureau has curtailed products.<sup>5</sup> For example, the Bureau recently announced that state-level data on opening, hiring, layoffs, and quits would no longer be made available on a monthly basis—instead only releasing the state-level data on an annual basis moving forward.<sup>6</sup> These changes reflect long-standing understaffing and underinvestment, despite warnings from current and former staff.<sup>7</sup> As recently as Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25), the BLS required an emergency supplemental simply to maintain the Current Population Survey sample and begin to take steps towards modernization plans that are already more than a decade old.<sup>8</sup> The BLS has never restarted data series that had been cut due to sequestration in 2013, including the elimination of the Mass Layoff Statistics program, which crucially provided “information that identifies, describes, and tracks the effects of major job cutbacks in the economy”.<sup>9</sup>

The ERS has a responsibility to “anticipate trends and emerging issues in agriculture, food, the environment, and rural America and to conduct high-quality, objective economic research to inform and enhance public and private decision making,” including by producing data on the agricultural economy, food and nutrition, food safety, global markets, and rural economies.<sup>10</sup> Regrettably, staffing at the ERS has declined by roughly one-third since FY24.<sup>11</sup> It is both the

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<sup>4</sup> *Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey* (LNU09300000), U.S. Bureau of Lab. Stats., [https://data.bls.gov/timeseries/LNU09300000&from\\_year=2013&output\\_type=column](https://data.bls.gov/timeseries/LNU09300000&from_year=2013&output_type=column) (last visited July 29, 2026).

<sup>5</sup> *About the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics*, U.S. Bureau of Lab. Stats., <https://www.bls.gov/bls/about-bls.htm> (last visited July 29, 2026); *2026 Midyear Update: Resources and Leadership Supporting Federal Statistics*, Am. Stat. Ass’n (July 28, 2026), [https://www.amstat.org/docs/default-source/amstat-documents/FedStatHealth\\_MidYearUpdate.pdf](https://www.amstat.org/docs/default-source/amstat-documents/FedStatHealth_MidYearUpdate.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> *Upcoming Change to the JOLTS State Estimates*, U.S. Bureau of Lab. Stats., <https://www.bls.gov/jlt/notices/2025/jltst-upcoming-change.htm> (last visited July 29, 2026).

<sup>7</sup> Letter from Friends of BLS members, including former BLS Commissioners Groshen and Beach, to Appropriations Chairs and Ranking Members of the House and Senate regarding the need for a supplemental appropriation for the BLS in FY25 (Sept. 24, 2026), <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5bedb4a070e802cb58b90b79/t/66f275f1e8443b353c2a7789/1727165937230/BLS+Appropriations+Letter+for+CPS+FY25+-+FINALPDF.pdf>; *US Labor Department reducing CPI collection sample amid hiring freeze*, Reuters (June 4, 2025), <https://www.reuters.com/business/us-inflation-data-collection-hurt-by-trump-era-hiring-freeze-wsj-says-2025-06-04/>.

<sup>8</sup> Letter from Friends of BLS members, including former BLS Commissioners Groshen and Beach, to Appropriations Chairs and Ranking Members of the House and Senate regarding the need for a supplemental appropriation for the BLS in FY25 (Sept. 24, 2026), <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5bedb4a070e802cb58b90b79/t/66f275f1e8443b353c2a7789/1727165937230/BLS+Appropriations+Letter+for+CPS+FY25+-+FINALPDF.pdf>; Letter to Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Chairs and Ranking Members regarding the Fiscal Year 2026 budget (May 7, 2026), [Friends+of+BLS+FY26+Recommendation+Letter.pdf](#); Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025, Pub. L. No. 119-4, tit. IX, 139 Stat. 31 (2025).

<sup>9</sup> *BLS 2013 Sequestration Information*, U.S. Bureau of Lab. Stats., [https://www.bls.gov/bls/sequester\\_info.htm](https://www.bls.gov/bls/sequester_info.htm) (last modified Mar. 3, 2013).

<sup>10</sup> *About ERS*, U.S. Dep’t of Agric., <https://www.ers.usda.gov/about-ers> (last visited July 29, 2026).

<sup>11</sup> *About the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics*, U.S. Bureau of Lab. Stats., <https://www.bls.gov/bls/about-bls.htm> (last visited July 29, 2026); *2026 Midyear Update: Resources and Leadership Supporting Federal Statistics*, Am. Stat.

Administration's prerogative<sup>12</sup> and our concern<sup>13</sup> that staff departures will continue to undermine the ERS's irreplaceable work to understand the challenges faced across the country regarding agriculture and food security. In addition, at a time when more than 4.5 million people have been kicked off of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) as a result of the Big, Ugly Bill,<sup>14</sup> I have been alarmed by the Administration's decision to stop the ERS's production of Household Food Security Reports, which provide information on the prevalence and severity of food insecurity among U.S. households.<sup>15</sup>

Situated within the Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences, the NCES has a "Congressional mandate to collect, collate, analyze, and report complete statistics on the condition of American education; conduct and publish reports; and review and report on education activities internationally."<sup>16</sup> The current Administration terminated "all but three of its approximately 100 staff" in March 2025, before naming Acting Director of the Institute of Education Sciences as acting commissioner of NCES as well in July 2025, thereby bringing its staff level up to four people for FY25.<sup>17</sup> As of July 1, 2026, NCES had 12 staff members.<sup>18</sup> Among 74 NCES studies/data collections, projects, and data tools being tracked closely by the American Statistical Association, "13 are active, 9 remain active with reduced scope, 25 are inactive, 22 are complete (meaning that, as of early 2025, there were no plans to continue them), 3 are inactive at NCES but still being conducted by another agency, and 2 have an unknown status."<sup>19</sup> Studies and projects on school crime and safety, teachers and principals, homeschooling and virtual education, and adults' skills and competencies are among those which are currently "inactive."<sup>20</sup>

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Ass'n (July 28, 2026), [https://www.amstat.org/docs/default-source/amstat-documents/FedStatHealth\\_MidYearUpdate.pdf](https://www.amstat.org/docs/default-source/amstat-documents/FedStatHealth_MidYearUpdate.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> Jory Heckman, *USDA expects 'significant number' of staff facing relocation to leave their jobs*, Fed. News Network (July 2, 2026), <https://federalnewsnetwork.com/workforce/2026/07/usda-expects-significant-number-of-staff-facing-relocation-to-leave-their-jobs/>.

<sup>13</sup> Letter from Ranking Member Scott and Subcommittee Ranking Member Bonamici to Secretary Rollins regarding the July 24, 2025, announcement that USDA would be reorganized and ERS staff would be relocated (Aug. 21, 2025), [https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/scott\\_bonamici\\_letter\\_to\\_rollins\\_re\\_usda\\_reorganization.pdf](https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/scott_bonamici_letter_to_rollins_re_usda_reorganization.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> Dottie Rosenbaum et al., *SNAP Tracker: People Are Losing Food Assistance as the Harmful 2025 Republican Reconciliation Law Is Implemented*, Center on Budget and Pol'y Priorities (July 21, 2026), <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/snap-tracker-people-are-losing-food-assistance-as-the-republican-megabill>.

<sup>15</sup> Letter from Ranking Member Scott and Subcommittee Ranking Member Bonamici to Secretary Rollins regarding the termination of future Household Food Security Reports (Oct. 1, 2026), [https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/scott\\_bonamici\\_letter\\_to\\_usda\\_termination\\_of\\_ers\\_household\\_food\\_security\\_reports.pdf](https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/scott_bonamici_letter_to_usda_termination_of_ers_household_food_security_reports.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> *The National Center for Education Statistics: Who We Are*, Nat'l Center for Educ. Stats., <https://nces.ed.gov/national-center-education-statistics-nces/about> (last visited July 29, 2026).

<sup>17</sup> *2026 Midyear Update: Resources and Leadership Supporting Federal Statistics*, Am. Stat. Ass'n (July 28, 2026), [https://www.amstat.org/docs/default-source/amstat-documents/FedStatHealth\\_MidYearUpdate.pdf](https://www.amstat.org/docs/default-source/amstat-documents/FedStatHealth_MidYearUpdate.pdf).

<sup>18</sup> *Id.*

<sup>19</sup> *Id.*

<sup>20</sup> *Id.*

Research estimates suggest that preserving trust in the integrity and quality of official statistics generates billions of dollars in economic benefits by providing clarity to policymakers,<sup>21</sup> businesses, and the public, who rely on these vital agencies to understand the world around us. I ask that you schedule a hearing in September so that Committee Members have the opportunity to hear about the erosion of our nation's federal statistical infrastructure and better understand the downstream effects of poorer data quality and less frequent product releases.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



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**ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT**  
Ranking Member

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<sup>21</sup> Nicholas Bloom et al., *The Value of Reliable Statistics*, Nat'l Bureau of Econ. Rsch. (Apr. 2026), [https://www.nber.org/system/files/working\\_papers/w35135/w35135.pdf](https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w35135/w35135.pdf).