

November 13, 2017

Representative Paul Ryan
Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives
1233 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Patty Murray
United States Senate
SR-154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan and Senator Murray,

We write to express appreciation for your launch and support of the Commission on Evidence Based Policymaking. We support the Commission's aim to improve access to federal and state data for research and evaluation without jeopardizing the privacy and confidentiality of those from whom the data originate. Research that benefits from access to federal and state statistical and administrative data advances our understanding of our economy, and sheds light on vital issues related to Americans' economic, health, and educational well-being. Improved access to federal and state data would allow for analysis that contributes to effective and efficient federal programs and policies. We hope that you will encourage authorization and oversight committees of the Congress to make improvements in the access to federal and state administrative data for evidence based policymaking.

We also hope this could be part of a broader effort to reduce the barriers to business data synchronization across federal statistical agencies. Removing the barriers to synchronization across federal statistical agencies will improve the measurement of key national indicators on the health of the American economy while reducing the costs to the taxpayer and reduce paperwork burdens on the private sector by reducing duplication across the statistical agencies. Reducing barriers to data synchronization will also facilitate the aims of evidence based policymaking.

The American Economic Association (AEA) has over 20,000 members from academia, private business and government. The AEA Committee on Economic Statistics promotes the involvement of economists in improving the collection, analysis and reporting of economic statistics and research on economic measurement. The AEA Committee on Government Relations represents the interests of the economics profession in Washington DC and other locations around the country without taking a position on questions of economic policy or on any partisan matter. If in any way we might be helpful in that regard, we offer our expertise on economic statistics and policy-relevant research.

Thanks again for your support for better access to and linkage of federal data for evidence-based analysis.

Most sincerely,

John C. Haltiwanger

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Phillip L. Swagel

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(This letter was endorsed by the AEA Committees on Economic Statistics and Government Relations. Members of these Committees who are government employees are recused from this endorsement.)

cc: Senator Ron Johnson, Chair, Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs
Senator Claire McCaskill, Ranking Member, Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs
Representative Harold "Trey" Gowdy, Chair, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
Representative Elijah Cummings, Ranking Member, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform