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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING, AND
URBAN AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6075

August 6, 2026

The Honorable Joyce Meyer
Under Secretary of Commerce for
Economic Affairs
Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

The Honorable Vipin Arora
Director
Bureau of Economic Analysis
Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Meyer and Director Arora,

I write to request information regarding decisions by the Department of Commerce (Department) and the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) to alter key economic data metrics. As American families continue to struggle with high inflation caused by President Trump's economic policies, policymakers need access to reliable data about the economy so they can make informed decisions that will impact Americans' cost of living. However, recent reports note that the "opacity regarding [the changes] has raised some eyebrows,"¹ and that some of these changes may have been made without consultation of key experts.² Given the potential impact these methodological changes could have on the Federal Reserve's monetary policymaking, as well as the importance of transparency amidst the Trump Administration's attacks on the integrity of the nation's statistical system, the Department and BEA have an obligation to explain to the public its reasoning for these decisions and the processes by which these decisions were made.

The BEA is responsible for producing key measures of U.S. economic activity, notably including Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the Personal Consumption Expenditures (PCE) price index³, the latter of which has served as the Fed's preferred inflation gauge since 2000.⁴ On June 24, 2026, the BEA announced changes to how several components of the PCE price index are calculated.⁵ Specifically, the BEA's methodology will be updated for the following index categories: portfolio management and investment advice services, legal services, and computer software and accessories. The changes will broadly apply to data from the first quarter of 2021 through the first

¹ Wall Street Journal, "A Statistical Revamp Is About to Lower Inflation, at a Critical Time," Matt Grossman, July 19, 2026, <https://www.wsj.com/economy/central-banking/pce-inflation-data-updates-ca7bfd61>.

² NPR, "A Trump push to cut 'statistical noise' could mean less data from the Census Bureau," Hansi Lo Wang, June 12, 2026, <https://www.npr.org/2026/06/12/nx-s1-5855734/census-bureau-data-differential-privacy>.

³ Bureau of Economic Analysis, "Who We Are," <https://www.bea.gov/about/who-we-are>.

⁴ Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, "What Is PCE? Explaining the Fed's Preferred Inflation Measure," David Pendered, May 20, 2026, <https://www.atlantafed.org/what-we-study/inflation/2026/05/20/what-is-pce-explaining-the-feds-preferred-inflation-measure>.

⁵ Bureau of Economic Analysis, "Preview of the 2026 Annual Update of the National Economic Accounts," Lisa Mataloni, June 24, 2026, <https://apps.bea.gov/scb/issues/2026/06-june/0626-nea-preview.htm>.

quarter of 2026.⁶ Economists estimate that these changes will likely lower recent core PCE inflation readings, with Goldman Sachs projecting that May core PCE inflation could be revised down from 3.4 percent to 3.2 percent.⁷

The practical impact of these changes may be significant. While “[s]tatistical agencies regularly tweak their indicators,” “[t]his makeover is getting added attention because it comes at a crucial time for monetary policy.”⁸ This comes amid President Trump’s broader pressure campaign at the Fed to lower interest rates. A recent article cited that “officials are torn over whether higher interest rates are needed, even a slightly cooler inflation rate could sway their thinking.”⁹ Given that the Federal Reserve relies on PCE data to set interest rates and take other actions to execute its dual mandate of maximum employment and stable prices, changes to these metrics could have meaningful effects on American families and workers.

Through a June 2026 Department Administrative Order, the Department also announced changes to data confidentiality when it barred the use of “noise infusion,” a common method that statistical agencies use to publish local demographic and industry data that does not reveal the confidential information of individual persons or businesses.¹⁰ Under the Department’s change, agencies are now directed to rely on “coarsening” or data suppression, meaning that they must aggregate data details into broader groups or not produce it at all. This change would inhibit policymakers’ and market participants’ ability to understand the regions they serve. For example, coarsening county-level data would result in broad estimates of employment instead of detailed breakdowns by gender or race.¹¹ Experts have noted that the move to data coarsening may undermine the accuracy of neighborhood-level data,¹² and “may spell the end of a wide swath of data from the Census Bureau, including key statistics used for redistricting, policymaking and research.”¹³ While our statistical agencies should be focused on improving data accuracy and privacy, imposing a blanket Department ban will make data less available and harm the U.S. statistical system.

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ Reuters, “Methodology changes could lower US May core PCE inflation, economists say,” June 29, 2026, <https://www.reuters.com/business/methodology-changes-could-lower-us-may-core-pce-inflation-economists-say-2026-06-29/>.

⁸ Wall Street Journal, “A Statistical Revamp Is About to Lower Inflation, at a Critical Time,” Matt Grossman, July 19, 2026, <https://www.wsj.com/economy/central-banking/pce-inflation-data-updates-ca7bfd61>.

⁹ Wall Street Journal, “A Statistical Revamp Is About to Lower Inflation, at a Critical Time,” Matt Grossman, July 19, 2026, <https://www.wsj.com/economy/central-banking/pce-inflation-data-updates-ca7bfd61>; Washington Post, “Trump wants rate cuts. More Fed officials say hikes could be next,” Andrew Ackerman, July 17, 2026, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2026/07/17/trump-wants-rate-cuts-more-fed-officials-say-hikes-could-be-next/>.

¹⁰ Department of Commerce, Office of Privacy and Open Government, “Disclosure Avoidance for Statistical Products,” June 4, 2026, <https://www.commerce.gov/opog/disclosure-avoidance-statistical-products>.

¹¹ Data Rescue Project, “The Government Just Banned Math (only mildly hyperbolic),” Lynda Kellam, June 17, 2026, <https://www.datarescueproject.org/differential-privacy-statement/>.

¹² Dataindex.us, “A New Commerce Policy Could Mean Less Public Data, Not Better Public Data,” Christopher Steven Marcum, Meghan Maury, and Beth Jarosz, June 11, 2026, <https://dataindex.us/newsletter/article/5ed3272e-9a35-4f38-881b-c62ad45d6a56>.

¹³ NPR, “A Trump push to cut ‘statistical noise’ could mean less data from the Census Bureau,” Hansi Lo Wang, June 12, 2026, <https://www.npr.org/2026/06/12/nx-s1-5855734/census-bureau-data-differential-privacy>.

The decision to bar noise infusion data was seemingly made without the consultation of career staff or scientific experts.¹⁴ as one analyst noted, “[the order] takes the public out of the process. It takes the experts out of the process. This feels very much like a political choice.”¹⁵ This follows a string of attacks against the United States’ statistical system.¹⁶ In March 2025, the Administration terminated key advisory committees at BEA and the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) that employed external experts who were tasked with recommending ways to improve and modernize economic data.¹⁷ In August 2025, President Trump fired BLS Commissioner Dr. Erika McEntarfer based on false claims that she “rigged” employment data “in order to make Republicans, and [Trump], look bad.”¹⁸ By October 2025, amid Trump’s government shutdown, the BLS canceled the release of its full monthly jobs report for the first time in the agency’s history.¹⁹ It is more important than ever that the Department and BEA publicly explain and justify their decisions to change methodologies that will affect American households.

To better understand these methodological changes and how the Department of Commerce and BEA arrived at these decisions, I request detailed answers to the following questions by no later than August 20, 2026:

1. Please describe the process by which the BEA arrived at its decision to update its PCE inflation measurements. In your response, please note when discussions first began, the process by which a final decision was rendered, and any rules the BEA used to determine such actions.
 - a. What analysis, if any, has the BEA completed to determine the effect of changing its PCE inflation measurements?
2. Inflation data composite weights determine how much each individual item’s price data contributes to the aggregate price index.²⁰ Publishing them would allow outside experts to reproduce the BEA’s calculation and better understand the PCE inflation revision. Will you commit to publicly releasing the composite weights used to construct the BEA’s updated inflation measure?
3. Will you commit to publicly releasing PCE inflation data using the new and old method through the end of 2026?

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ Politico, “Data wonks warn of lasting damage as Trump weighs shake-up of government statistics collection,” Aaron Pellish, August 12, 2025, <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/08/12/donald-trump-government-statistics-00505923>.

¹⁷ Politico, “‘Bad sign’: Purge of data experts raises alarms over economic reports,” Sam Sutton, March 21, 2025, <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/03/21/labor-commerce-department-economy-data-doge-00241559>

¹⁸ AP News, “Trump removes official overseeing jobs data after dismal employment report,” Christopher Rugaber and Josh Boak, August 1, 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/trump-jobs-firing-f00e9bf96d0110519be9bf4f3ec89195>; Truth Social Post by President Donald J. Trump, @realDonaldTrump, August 1, 2025, <https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/114954846612623858>.

¹⁹ CNBC, “White House says October jobs and inflation data may never be released because of the shutdown,” Jeff Cox, November 12, 2025, <https://www.cnbc.com/2025/11/12/white-house-october-data-release.html>.

²⁰ Bureau of Economic Analysis, “What accounts for the differences in the PCE price index and the Consumer Price Index?,” November 3, 2010, <https://www.bea.gov/help/faq/555>.

4. Will you commit to retroactively applying the new method to PCE inflation data going back to 2024 and publicly releasing the findings?
5. Please explain why the Department of Commerce chose to ban the use of noise infusion and the process by which the Department arrived at this decision.
 - a. Why did the Department not consult outside experts when reaching its decision? Which experts were consulted?
 - b. Will the noise infusion ban result in the Department producing less data than it has in the past? If so, please provide an estimate of how many series it expects will no longer be produced.
 - c. How will the Department ensure that the noise infusion ban will not lead to lost data availability?
6. The 2030 Census will determine the U.S. House of Representatives apportionment and inform how taxpayer dollars are allocated across the country.²¹ What analysis, if any, has the Department completed to determine the effect of the noise infusion ban on 2030 Census data?

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren
Ranking Member
Committee on Banking,
Housing, and Urban Affairs

²¹ United States Census Bureau, "About the 2030 Census," January 21, 2026, <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/decade/2030/planning-management.html>.