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Dear Dr. Foster

The purpose of this letter is to express our desire for Census to fill the extended vacancy for the chief of the Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) program. I am writing on behalf of the Boards of Director for both the Labor Market Information (LMI) Institute and the Council for Community and Economic Research. These sister organizations truly value the LEHD program as a partner and a resource. We are concerned that this extended vacancy may cause long-term setbacks to a program that is important not only to states and data users but also to Census. Furthermore, we are expressing our strong support for Census to hire a chief who has management and outreach skills, who understands the state LMI system, as well as has the knowledge to guide a very capable technical staff at Census.

We ask this in the context of strong continued support for a program that delivers true value to Census' and LMI's customers. We would like to congratulate the Census Bureau on its leadership and persistence in creating and leading the LEHD program in collaboration with the state labor market information (LMI) agencies. This program has resulted in several innovative products that are invaluable to businesses as well as policy makers in workforce development, economic development, community planning, and higher education. This is illustrated by a recent joint Council for Community and Economic Research (C2ER) and LMI Institute-sponsored webinar on the QWI Explorer tool that drew more than 300 participants. Furthermore, OMB is highlighting LEHD in documents and presentations related to the President's Management Agenda as an example of how administrative data can be leveraged as an asset.

As you know, LEHD relies on data sharing agreements with the states to gain permission to use state-collected wage data. While we recognize this is a time-consuming process that requires not only technical expertise but also great patience and diplomacy. In short, LEHD is a vital asset to the Census Bureau and its success requires continued attention – not only to the quality of the product but the strength of the state-federal partnership.

Unfortunately, LEHD has been without a permanent leader for many months. The program has very capable technical staff. They are very creative, and the states value their creativity in developing new products. However, it is vital that LEHD have a permanent leader who not only has technical skills, but also has the ability to understand state priorities and address idiosyncratic issues that arise in a program that engages states through a barter arrangement in which states deliver data to Census in exchange for receiving state-valued products and services in return. Because the states participate voluntarily, the

LEHD leader must have skills that include delivering data products in a timely manner, continuously selling the program to state agencies, expanding usage of LEHD to relevant customers, and continuously enhancing products to meet those needs as well as the needs of federal partners.

We strongly urge Census to move expeditiously in filling this important position and in engaging with the states to ensure that the new LEHD chief has not only the technical but also the management skills to succeed. The future of the program depends on prompt and effective action.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kenneth E. Poolé".

Kenneth E. Poolé, Ph.D.

Executive Director

Labor Market Information Institute

Council for Community and Economic Research