



# American Economic Association

Committee on Economic Statistics <https://www.aeaweb.org/about-aea/committees/economic-statistics>

May 10, 2021

Janelle Jones  
Chief Economist  
U.S. Department of Labor  
200 Constitution Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Ms. Jones,

Congratulations on your appointment as Chief Economist of the Department of Labor. What an exciting time to be taking on the challenge!

I read with great interest the blog that you and Alexander Hertel-Fernandez posted on DOL's Role in Advancing Racial Equity and Supporting Underserved Communities. There are great ideas in it. I want to make you aware of the American Economic Association's (AEA) examination of data deficiencies for measuring the effects of systemic racism. Our new report makes a number of recommendations that apply to DOL, not by way of directly improving DOL programs, but, as importantly, on ways that would improve the Department's and other agencies' abilities to measure effects of systemic racism, and how they might change as programs are modified.

The attached report grew out of a January 2021 session co-sponsored by the AEA Committee on Economic Statistics and the National Economic Association. Informed by a large group of economists with experience in the economics of racial disparities, the report identifies problems with the standard survey approach taken by statistical agencies (including the Bureau of Labor Statistics), as well as problems of limited access to administrative data. We use Unemployment Insurance wage and claims data, which are collected and processed at the State level, as an example of issues with administrative data.

We hope you will find the report enlightening. If you would like to follow up with our Committee members, please let me know and we can set up a briefing.

With best wishes,

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