



VIRGINIA FOXX, NC
Chairwoman

ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT, VA
Ranking Member

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
AND THE WORKFORCE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
2176 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6100

MAJORITY – (202) 225-4527
FAX – (202) 225-9571

MINORITY – (202) 225-3725
FAX – (202) 226-5398

February 2, 2017

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

For over 100 years, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) has initiated “monthly studies on employment and payroll.”¹ Its present iteration – popularly known as the monthly employment situation report – provides non-partisan data on the United States labor market and the nation’s unemployment rate. We write to inquire about whether your Administration will continue the longstanding and bipartisan tradition of standing behind the BLS’s monthly employment situation report. We also seek a commitment that you and your Administration will not undermine or interfere with BLS’s independent mission to “collect, analyze, and disseminate economic information to support public and private decision-making.”²

We believe our inquiry is warranted because of the apparent skepticism and distrust of the nation’s unemployment rate expressed by you and your White House staff. In the first few days of your presidency, the White House press secretary reportedly refused to cite the official unemployment rate when directly asked to do so by a reporter.³ This comes after a presidential campaign where you falsely characterized the unemployment rate as “one of the biggest hoaxes in American modern politics.”⁴ Last February, you also incorrectly claimed the unemployment rate is “probably 28, 29, as high as 35. In fact, I even heard recently 42%.”⁵ This was just a few days after BLS reported the unemployment rate was 4.9 percent.

¹ Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Timeline,” (Last Modified Date: July 5, 2012), available at: <https://www.bls.gov/bls/history/timeline.htm>

² Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Mission Statement,” (Last Modified Date: April 13, 2010), available at: <https://www.bls.gov/bls/blsmisn.htm>

³ Allan Smith, “Sean Spicer Won’t Say What the Unemployment Rate Is,” *Business Insider*, (January 23, 2017), available at: <http://www.businessinsider.com/sean-spicer-unemployment-rate-2017-1>

⁴ Julia Horowitz, “Will Trump team try to undermine official unemployment numbers?” *CNN Money*, (January 25, 2017), available at: <http://money.cnn.com/2017/01/24/news/economy/trump-administration-unemployment-bls/index.html>

⁵ Lori Robertson, “Fact Check: Trump Wildly Inflates Unemployment,” *USA Today*, (February 10, 2016), available at: <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/elections/2016/02/10/fact-check-trump-wildly-inflates-unemployment/80202318/>

While the BLS's monthly employment situation report is not a panacea, it provides critical, non-partisan employment data that has been utilized for decades by presidents of both political parties, businesses of all sizes, Members of Congress, economists, and, most importantly, the American people. For them, the BLS monthly employment situation report has been a barometer of the country's economic well-being – and we believe Americans are correct to interpret it that way.

Moreover, BLS publishes five additional measures of unemployment and underemployment each month, which include those working part time but wanting to work full time, and those who are too discouraged to look for work because they believe there are no jobs available for them and the job search effort would be futile. These measures, when viewed in conjunction with the unemployment rate, provide the public and policy makers a more fulsome depiction of the extent of unemployment.

So when the BLS's independent analysis of the nation's labor market is mocked, politicized, and baselessly attacked, it not only delegitimizes the BLS's critically important work. It also erodes the public's trust. We respectfully recommend that you and your staff keep this in mind in the days ahead.

In the event that you and your Administration endorse alternative metrics to gauge the nation's unemployment rate, we trust you will communicate that decision to us and the American people forthwith, as well as your rationale for doing so.

As Members of the House Education and Workforce Committee, which has legislative and oversight jurisdiction over the BLS, we appreciate your attention to the issues we raised. We look forward to working with you to build on the significant job gains and economic progress that were achieved during the Obama presidency. We also stand ready to work with you to restore balance to the economy so that hardworking Americans can get ahead and provide a better future for their families.

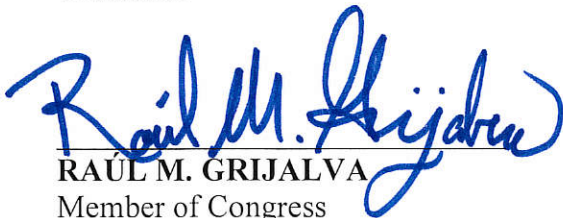
Sincerely,



ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT
Ranking Member
House Committee on Education and the
Workforce



SUSAN A. DAVIS
Member of Congress

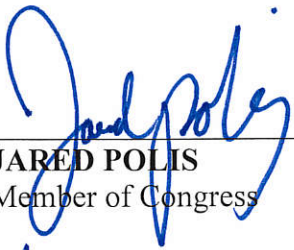


RAÚL M. GRIJALVA
Member of Congress



JOE COURTNEY
Member of Congress


MARCIA L. FUDGE
Member of Congress


JARED POLIS
Member of Congress


**GREGORIO KILILI CAMACHO
SABLAN**
Member of Congress


FREDERICA S. WILSON
Member of Congress


SUZANNE BONAMICI
Member of Congress

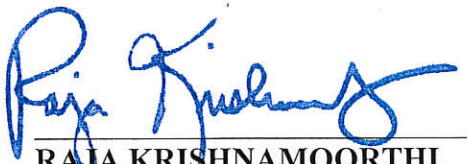

MARK TAKANO
Member of Congress


ALMA S. ADAMS
Member of Congress


MARK DESAULNIER
Member of Congress


DONALD NORCROSS
Member of Congress


LISA BLUNT ROCHESTER
Member of Congress


RAJA KRISHNAMOORTHY
Member of Congress


CAROL SHEA-PORTER
Member of Congress


ADRIANO ESPAILLAT
Member of Congress