

August 31, 2023

The Honorable Kay Granger  
Chairwoman  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-307, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1036 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Granger and Ranking Member DeLauro,

On behalf of state higher education leaders, I am writing to share our concerns regarding proposed funding reductions for the Current Surveys and Programs at the Census Bureau in the fiscal year (FY) 2024 Commerce-Justice-Science appropriations bill. The proposed budget cut could affect the maintenance and development of the Post-Secondary Employment Outcomes (PSEO) project, an innovative, experimental project at Census that has proven to be an important consumer information and accountability tool in higher education. We urge the committee to reconsider these cuts and fund the PSEO project at the highest levels possible under the current statutory limits.

Started in 2018, the PSEO project is a voluntary initiative between the Census Bureau, state agencies, and higher education entities providing earnings and outcomes data for college and university graduates by degree level, degree major, and post-secondary institution. PSEO data is derived by securely matching university degree completion information with wage information gathered as part of the Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics data collected by Census. PSEO provides data missed by the U.S. Department of Education's College Scorecard, which only accounts for recipients of federal student aid and does not distinguish between graduates and non-graduates. Many states have comprehensive longitudinal data systems, but these data systems cannot capture information on graduates who have left the state. Self-reported wage data to private entities are not scientifically valid.

PSEO data is a useful consumer information and accountability tool for stakeholders in higher education. The PSEO Explorer allows prospective students to search for institutions and programs providing the best return on investment, as well as provide insight into the industries and job markets of graduates at the one-, five-, and 10-year mark. For college administrators and state lawmakers, PSEO data allows them to better understand the return on investment and work to improve academic programs, hold institutions and programs accountable for their outcomes, and better align employers to college graduates in the state. In Iowa, for example, lawmakers are so pleased with the consumer information aspect of the data that they passed a state law requiring public universities in the state to provide the PSEO outcome information to new students each year.

We are excited about PSEO's rapid growth. There are currently Census partnerships with higher education providers in 27 of the 50 states and nine additional states who are interested in joining. In June, Census announced new partnerships with college and university systems and agencies in Georgia, Minnesota, South Carolina, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. SHEEO continues to share information about this innovative program with our members to maximize program participation.

With additional investment, there are opportunities for expanding and improving PSEO in the years ahead. The Administration's FY24 budget request proposals include new investments that would transition PSEO from an



experimental to production data project. Additional funding would enable Census to cover more institutions and graduates, allow for data disaggregation by race/ethnicity and gender, as well as improve PSEO data by integrating W-2 and 1099 wage records.

With billions of student and taxpayer dollars invested annually in higher education, accountability and transparency are necessary for a functioning higher education marketplace and proper stewardship of taxpayer dollars. The PSEO project is an important step forward in the collective effort to provide high-quality college opportunities providing a strong return on investment. SHEEO urges Congress to reconsider proposed cuts to the Census Bureau and fund PSEO at the maximum levels under the statutory cap.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. If you have any questions, please contact Tom Harnisch, Vice President for Government Relations, at [tharnisch@sheeo.org](mailto:tharnisch@sheeo.org) or 202.558.7625.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert E. Anderson", written in a cursive style.

Robert E. Anderson  
President  
State Higher Education Executive Officers Association

CC: The Honorable Virginia Foxx, Chairwoman, House Education and Workforce Committee  
The Honorable Bobby Scott, Ranking Member, House Education and Workforce Committee