

SECRETARY OF LABOR
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20210

February 24, 2023

Dear Workforce Information Advisory Council Members:

Thank you for your report titled “Supporting a Full Recovery.” I also thank all past and present committee members for their participation and leadership in coordinating and guiding the work of the Workforce Information Advisory Council (WIAC). The Department of Labor (Department or DOL) appreciates your efforts and your thoughtful recommendations.

We consider your recommendations valuable inputs to inform the Department’s strategies for helping the nation continue its economic recovery. And, we recognize the important role of workforce and labor market information (WLMI), data, and evidence in designing and implementing policies and programs—at the federal, state, and local levels—that support American workers as they seek to re-engage with or advance in the labor market.

The Department provides the following responses to the recommendations in your report:

Recommendation One: Support immediate action to establish a National Secure Data Service (NSDS).

In August of 2022, the President signed into law the Creating Helpful Incentives to Produce Semiconductors and Science Act of 2022 (CHIPS and Science Act of 2022), which will make significant investments to strengthen American manufacturing, supply chains, and national security, and invest in research and development, science and technology, and the workforce of the future. This law also authorizes the National Science Foundation to establish a demonstration project to inform the creation of an NSDS that aligns with the principles, best practices, and priority actions recommended by the Advisory Committee on Data for Evidence Building, to the extent feasible.

The Department will continue working with stakeholders to prioritize the value of this service to the public workforce system, including by identifying opportunities for developing, marketing, and linking statistical and administrative data that meets the needs of the Department and state, local, and tribal governments. The Department is also considering remaining questions about the NSDS, such as those raised by the Congressional Research Service in its August 2021 report, about whether and for how long data should be saved, and the appropriate technologies to facilitate data sharing and data protection.

Recommendation Two: Articulate the key principles that must be adhered to in the design of the NSDS.

The Department supports the establishment of the NSDS and will work with stakeholders to identify key principles for the NSDS to meet their critical needs. The Department is sensitive to the needs of data owners to maintain appropriate controls and security protections, while also optimizing modern technologies to support the NSDS as a service to open data availability to all interested users.

Recommendation Three: Publicly commit to DOL’s engagement with the newly established NSDS.

In carrying out the NSDS demonstration, the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022 calls for the National Science Foundation to engage with federal and state agencies regarding statistical data to support evidence-building activities. While the law does not mandate the Department’s participation in the demonstration, we plan to continue to engage with the National Science Foundation and other relevant partners to identify potential opportunities for the Department to support the effort. The Department will consider pilot projects and/or other contributions to the NSDS demonstration with input from the appropriate government agencies and other stakeholders.

Recommendation Four: Direct the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) to co-author a plan for improving DOL-supported data on job openings based on input from the associations representing state WLMI agencies (LMI Institute, National Association of State Workforce Agencies).

The Department, specifically the BLS Job Openings and Labor Turnover (JOLTS) program, recently released state-level estimates. The Department understands the need for better WLMI at the local level, and is working with BLS to consider the feasibility of providing more JOLTS estimates at the state level. The Department is also considering the feasibility of using the National Labor Exchange Research Hub to enhance state level job openings and labor turnover estimates, which could then complement survey data information on changes in the labor market, such as job changes in critical sectors related to federal investment such as infrastructure, manufacturing, and energy sectors.

Recommendation Five: Direct ETA’s Office of Unemployment Insurance (OUI) and the Secretary’s Office of Unemployment Insurance Modernization (OUIIM) to obtain state agency input regarding how DOL can best provide Unemployment Insurance (UI) grant funding to expand state capacity to gather and effectively use current, reliable UI data in support of UI claimants finding new work.

As you are aware, the Department is focusing numerous resources towards the improvement of the UI systems, specifically within the three pillars of (1) preventing and detecting fraud; (2) promoting equitable access; and (3) ensuring the timely payment of benefits. The Department agrees that the greater availability of reliable trend data on the number and characteristics of UI claimants by state and local area is important and would improve the capacity of state and local workforce agencies to assist UI claimants in finding new work. As feasible and within the scope of available UI grant funding, we will work with our state partners to explore developing this capacity in the UI systems. DOL is also building evidence and expanding services for

unemployed workers, such as in the Reemployment Service and Eligibility Assessment program and the WIOA Dislocated Worker program and in National Dislocated Worker Grants.

Recommendation Six: Direct the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy (OASP) to prepare a report, in consultation with ETA and BLS, for the Secretary's consideration that: identifies public and private data sources which have the potential to build evidence regarding workers' experiences and challenges in seeking and finding new jobs; and suggests options for DOL agencies to use these data sources to help address barriers that workers experience.

The Department, including OASP and ETA, are researching resources to help identify actionable data that can help us provide guidance and training to ensure job seekers have the best information to navigate the job application process and to ensure they can compete for a job or career they are interested in and qualified to perform. These resources could include data tools such as OASP's Career Trajectories and Occupational Transitions Dashboard (<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/oasp/evaluation/resources/career-trajectories-and-occupational-transitions-dashboard>) and the Women's Bureau report Employment and Earnings by Sex and Race: Exploring Equal Employment Opportunity Data Map (<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/wb/data/sex-race-eeo-data>) that can be used to address barriers to accessing better jobs.

The actions the Department will undertake based upon your recommendations will provide needed improvement to the workforce and labor market information systems at the local, state, and national levels. These efforts align with the Department's key priorities for strengthening the workforce system through opening opportunities for vulnerable workers and communities; developing new industry partnerships that lead to real, good jobs; building a better care economy; and taking action today for the future of work. Should you have any questions, please contact Steve Rietzke, the WIAC's Designated Federal Officer and Division Chief for ETA's Division of National Programs, Tools, and Technical Assistance at (202) 693-3912 or rietzke.steven@dol.gov.

Sincerely,



MARTIN J. WALSH
Secretary of Labor