



## Select Committee on Economic Disparity and Fairness in Growth

U.S. House of Representatives

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WASHINGTON DC, 20515  
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April 18, 2022

The Honorable Gina Raimondo  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Raimondo,

We are writing to you today about the Bureau of Economic Analysis's Distributing Personal Income data series. As you know, these indicators, which BEA started publishing in 2020, are the most comprehensive picture of how economic growth is distributed among U.S. households that our federal statistical agencies produce. As members of the Select Committee on Economic Disparity and Fairness in Growth, we believe this dataset is absolutely essential for understanding the modern economy.

These data allow users to see whether U.S. households are sharing in the prosperity of our growing economy. Unfortunately, we know that many families are left behind. Data show that disparities in wealth and income are larger now than at any time in at least the past 80 years. Moreover, these disparities are often rooted in where workers and their families live and who they are. The data show that men earn more than women, Black Americans face barriers to building wealth, urban counties experience faster growth than rural ones, and much more.

As a committee that was established to investigate the significant prosperity gap between the wealthiest members of our society and everyone else, we are interested in bipartisan solutions that promote equity in growth. The BEA dataset is an important first step. We can only manage what we can measure.

We were pleased to see that the President's budget for FY2023 includes a request for \$2.7 million to fund this important initiative. The Department should be commended for taking on the historic task of adding distributional data to our national accounts. We intend to work with our colleagues in Congress to make sure BEA receives this critical funding.

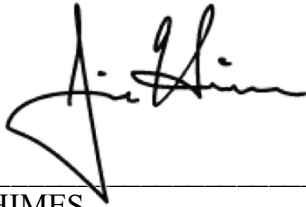
Although we believe BEA should have latitude to develop the data series as they see fit, we want to strongly recommend that these resources be used to improve the timeliness of the data. Currently, this data series is released once annually on a significant time lag. We believe that the distribution of U.S. economic growth is just as important as the aggregate amount of economic growth, and that both should be reported on a similar schedule. BEA's goal should be quarterly releases that come out alongside aggregate personal income growth.

A recent [BEA feasibility](#) report suggests that increasing the frequency of the release of this data series is not possible under current resource constraints. The Washington Center for Equitable Growth issued a response arguing that [increased frequency is feasible but will require a significant increase in BEA](#)

[resources](#). Accordingly, we ask that BEA prioritize improving the timeliness of the data with any new resources it receives.

Thank you again for recognizing the importance of this data series in your budget request. We will work with our colleagues in Congress to provide the resources, both fiscal and non-fiscal, necessary to provide a window into the economic wellbeing of American households up and down the income ladder. We look forward to being able to rely on quarterly, disaggregated personal income data to help inform our legislating in the near future. We hope that you share this goal and that we can work together to realize it.

Sincerely,



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JIM HIMES  
Chair



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MARCY KAPTUR  
Member of Congress



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GWEN MOORE  
Member of Congress



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VICENTE GONZALEZ  
Member of Congress



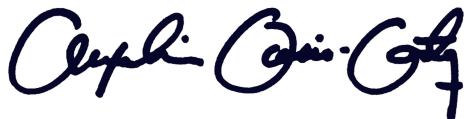
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PRAMILA JAYAPAL  
Member of Congress



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ANGIE CRAIG  
Member of Congress



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ALEXANDRIA OCASIO-CORTEZ  
Member of Congress



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SARA JACOBS  
Member of Congress

CC:

Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House

Don Graves, Deputy Secretary of Commerce, U.S. Department of Commerce

Mary Bohman, Acting Director and Deputy Director, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

Dennis Fixler, Chief Economist, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis