

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

May 16, 2018

Mick Mulvaney
Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th St. NW
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dr. Nancy Potok
Chief Statistician
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th St. NW
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Director Mulvaney and Dr. Potok,

We write to express our concern about your failure to respond to our letters to you regarding the proposal to reorganize and privatize the Puerto Rico Institute of Statistics (PRIS).¹

On February 2, 2018, Representative Velázquez and 14 of her colleagues in the House wrote to Dr. Potok, urging that Puerto Rico be included in federal statistical programs and surveys carried out by the U.S. Census Bureau and other federal agencies, and describing how “PRIS had proven to be a key ally of the federal statistical agencies.”² That letter requested an update from the Census Bureau and Department of Commerce. On February 8, 2018, Senator Warren wrote to both of you, echoing the concerns of Representative Velázquez and her colleagues, and requesting information from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) about how reorganizing PRIS would affect the Federal Statistical System.³

Since we sent you those letters, the Financial Oversight and Management Board for Puerto Rico urged Puerto Rico Governor Ricardo Rosselló not to dismantle PRIS.⁴ Dozens of scientific organizations and professional organizations have similarly exhorted Governor Rosselló to

¹ The proposal would, among other things, place PRIS under the Puerto Rico Department of Economic Development and Commerce, outsource core PRIS functions to the private sector, and remove the independent board of directors that appoints PRIS’s executive director. NBC News, “Truth in numbers: Groups, government clash over accurate stats in Puerto Rico,” Nicole Acevedo, April 23, 2018, <https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/puerto-rico-crisis/truth-numbers-groups-government-clash-over-accurate-stats-puerto-rico-n864416>.

² Letter from Representative Nydia Velázquez et al. to Dr. Nancy Potok, February 2, 2018, <https://velazquez.house.gov/sites/velazquez.house.gov/files/2.2.18%20Letter%20re%20PRIS%20privatization%20concerns%20%28SIGNED%29.pdf>.

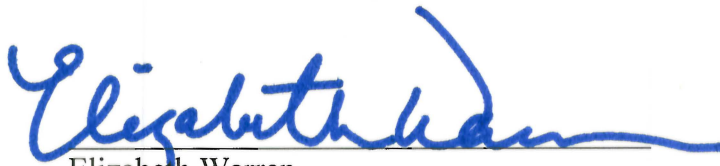
³ Letter from Senator Elizabeth Warren to Director Mick Mulvaney and Dr. Nancy Potok, February 8, 2018, https://www.warren.senate.gov/files/documents/2018_02_08_Letter_to_OMB_on_Impact_of_PRIS_privatization.pdf.

⁴ Letter from Natalie A. Jaresko to Governor Ricardo Rosselló, February 14, 2018, <https://juntasupervision.pr.gov/wp-content/uploads/wpfd/50/5a84a301be812.pdf>.

maintain the independence of PRIS and its board of directors.⁵ The certified Commonwealth Fiscal Plan, however, would allow for PRIS to be wrapped into the Department of Economic Development and Commerce and stripped of its autonomy. We therefore continue to have concerns about the status of the agency and the impact of changes to the status on data collection in Puerto Rico.

We have attached our earlier letters on this subject, and ask that you reply to the questions posed in these letters (enclosed), by May 31, 2018.

Sincerely,


Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator
Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress

⁵ Letter from American Statistical Association et al. to Governor Ricardo Rosselló, May 7, 2018, http://www.amstat.org/asa/files/pdfs/POL-PRIS_Sign-OnLetter.pdf.