



THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20201

October 25, 2021

Linette T. Scott, MD, MPH
Chair, Board of Scientific Counselors
National Center for Health Statistics
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, Georgia 30329

Dear Dr. Scott:

Thank you for your recent correspondence regarding the essential role of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) as an independent federal statistical agency and the reliable source for coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) mortality data for the nation. We appreciate your detailed concerns and suggestions put forward by the Board of Scientific Counselors (BSC) to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and I want to assure you that we are committed to scientific integrity as well as the independence of NCHS to be free from undue political influence. HHS fully supports NCHS and their mortality statistics.

HHS considers the National Vital Statistics System (NVSS) to be the pillar of the nation's authoritative source for mortality data, including COVID-19 deaths. We appreciate the critical role that partnerships play between NCHS and jurisdictions in collecting and reporting vital statistics. HHS's steadfast position is that NCHS produces data that are the gold standard for understanding the causes of mortality in the U.S.

CDC takes part in the annual budget formulation process, working with HHS to submit a budget to the Office of Management and Budget. Congress appropriates funding that CDC receives to operate its programs, to include NCHS. HHS continues to support the funding provided to NCHS through the annual budget process and to ensure sustainability of NVSS through partnerships with states and other jurisdictions.

We appreciate and value the Board's suggestions regarding the essential role of NCHS in keeping the American public informed, especially during this critical time.

Sincerely,

Xavier Becerra