

February 12, 2013

Ms. Doris Lefkowitz
Division of Survey Operations
Center for Financing Access and Cost Trends
AHRQ
540 Gaither Road
Rockville, MD 20850

RE: *Federal Register* notice of December 26, 2012, for the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality's (AHRQ) Medical Expenditure Panel Survey--Insurance Component (MEPS-IC) (OMB Number: 0935-0110)

Dear Ms. Lefkowitz:

The Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) strongly supports the continued collection of data by the AHRQ on the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey--Insurance Component (MEPS-IC). The data collected on the MEPS-IC form are critical to key components of BEA's economic statistics. The proposed additions and deletions to the survey questions should not impact BEA's use of the data.

BEA uses data from the MEPS-IC to derive national estimates of employer contributions for group health insurance for the private sector and state and local government (a component of compensation) and to prepare estimates of employee contributions for group health insurance (a component of personal consumption expenditures -- PCE).

BEA also uses the MEPS-IC to prepare separate, state-level estimates for the employer contributions to the health care cost of their employees for private ownership, for local ownership, and for state ownership. MEPS data are also used to adjust source data from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) for certain states that exclude pretax employee contributions to health insurance from their definition of wages for the QCEW. A list of items used by BEA is provided in the attachment below.

The utility of the data would be enhanced for BEA if the data were reported for employer contributions for single-service insurance plans. BEA currently makes its own estimate for this component which is part of the estimate for employer contributions for pension and insurance funds.

Please keep BEA informed concerning any modifications to this form. We are particularly interested in any modifications proposed during the form's approval process that would substantially affect our use of these data. For additional information, please contact Ruth Bramblett, Source Data Coordinator, on 202-606-9653 or by e-mail at Ruth.Bramblett@bea.gov. Should you need assistance in justifying this form to the Office of Management and Budget, please do not hesitate to contact BEA.

Sincerely,



Dennis J. Fixler
Chief Statistician

Attachment

Attachment

Uses of the AHRQ MEPS-IC by BEA

Items:	Used for:
Employer contributions for private and state and local employees	National Income and Product Accounts to estimate:
Employer and employees contributions for health insurance	Employer contributions for Group Health Insurance PCE health estimates
Total employer contributions for family coverage (current and retirees together)	State Level-Data for all items
Total employer contributions for single coverage (current and retirees together)	
Total employment (excludes retirees)	
Total enrollees (current and retirees together)	
Total single enrollees (current and retirees together)	
Total family enrollees (current and retirees together)	
Total active enrollees (only current employees)	
Total retiree enrollees (only retirees)	
Standard errors for each of the preceding variables' values	