



April 12, 2024

Honorable Jodey Arrington
Chairman
Committee on the Budget
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Brendan F. Boyle
Ranking Member
Committee on the Budget
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Re: H.R. 7032, Congressional Budget Office Data Sharing Act

Dear Chairman Arrington and Ranking Member Boyle:

You have asked how enacting H.R. 7032, the Congressional Budget Office Data Sharing Act, would improve CBO's access to data. The bill would amend the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 to clarify and strengthen the agency's general authority for accessing data from executive branch agencies.

The Congressional Budget Act provides CBO general authority to access data from a variety of sources. CBO works collaboratively with the executive branch to obtain data through formal and informal means. CBO also accesses data by using specific authority and by collaborating with other agencies.

CBO currently has more than 20 active data-use agreements with federal agencies. However, the shifting legal and regulatory frameworks at federal agencies can delay, weaken, or block access to information. The time necessary to negotiate and renew agreements can be unpredictable and is widely variable, taking from a couple of weeks to more than a year.

H.R. 7032 would amend section 201(d) of the Congressional Budget Act, which governs CBO's access to executive branch data, by striking a parenthetical statement in that section, "(other than material the disclosure of which would be a violation of law)." That condition is unnecessary when another statute more specifically governs CBO's access to certain data. It also can hamper access to data by requiring CBO to enter into additional discussions with agencies, thus impairing the timeliness of CBO's work.

Honorable Jodey Arrington and Honorable Brendan F. Boyle

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Enacting the bill would remove the caveat and, instead, provide CBO access to executive branch data unless that access is specifically disallowed by a future law. H.R. 7032 also includes a reference to section 203(e) of the Congressional Budget Act to highlight CBO's obligation to protect the restricted information it receives.

Better and more timely access to data enhances the precision of CBO's work, and it gives the Congress better—and more timely—information to make informed decisions about policy. Such access also helps to ensure equal footing with the executive branch.

I hope this information is useful to you. Please contact me if you have further questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Phillip L. Swagel", with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Phillip L. Swagel
Director

cc: Honorable David Valadao
Chairman
Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch
House Committee on Appropriations

Honorable Adriano Espaillat
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch
House Committee on Appropriations