

ALEX PIQUERO: Good afternoon. I'll start by saying thank you all for the work you did in your careers before you got here. And thank you for the service that you'll provide now as you move forward to the next year. My name is Dr. Alex Piquero. I'm the Director of the Bureau of Justice Statistics, which is one of thirteen federal statistical agencies in the federal government. Most of you know the Census--all right. Most of you know Bureau of Labor Statistics, BLS does crime and justice data. But like many of you, in just about every possible way, I shouldn't be on this stage or in this room. My mom and dad came from the United States. They were teenagers in Cuba, in Havana, and they left Cuba to come to United States, like a lot of their colleagues did in search of a better life and a better world. I grew up very modestly in the Washington, DC area with an older brother and my mom's parents, where I got to eat really good fried plantains and croquettas every day of my life. But, you know, the--that upbringing--or at least, my parents instilling in my brother and I, was the value of an education, the value and importance of family, and hard work, hard work, hard work, because there's always someone working harder than you right now. So that was the upbringing I had as a kid, and then went through college, like a lot of college students not knowing what I was going to do in my life. Became an academic, I was a faculty member for the last 25 years, most recently at the University of Miami, where I'm currently on leave from and I live, and I'm walking with my wife, who's the Chair of the Department of Sociology and Criminology in the University of Miami. We're walking our dog around the lake at the University of Miami. And I get a call. The call is, "Would you like to serve the President of the United States and be the Director of the Bureau of Justice Statistics?" To which I said, "I think I would really be interested in doing that." And so you go through this long process of--you know, the process of getting appointed. And so finally, in June of 2022, President Biden appointed me to be the Director of Bureau of Justice Statistics, the first--the first Hispanic to be the Director of BJS. And hopefully, with your commission we'll instill points going forward, that there's going to be many less firsts and a lot more seconds and thirds going on throughout the rest of our lives. It's the honor and privilege in my lifetime to serve the President, but also this agency, which is a statistical agency. Our job is to collect, analyze, and disseminate information for the American public, in a very fair way, where the data are the data. And as I said all along throughout my career, different people need different data in different ways for different reasons. So when I'm talking to my academic colleagues, we can geek out and use a lot of Greek equations. But when I'm talking to my parents, it's not going to be anything about Greek equations, and it's going to be, what do these data say? Not how those data should be used? That's a different set of questions for a different set of people to make those decisions. At BJS, we have been a very big champion for a long period of time at disaggregating data, which is something Denise talked a little bit a while ago. We disaggregate the majority of our data collections by race and ethnicity. So most of our analysis on crime and victimization will include Whites, Blacks, Hispanics, American--Asian-Americans, Indians, and other, depending upon the sample size. And that's always a bit of an issue when you think about data privacy is how many cases you can have to make sure that you have reliable, credible, and accurate data where you do protect people's individual privacy. And I'll give you a perfect relevant example. How many 53-year-old men are currently leading a federal statistical agency in United States? That'll be one. That's not about me, but that's about me saying that if I have a

couple of data elements in a data file, I can identify someone. So there is a tension that exists where we want to provide everybody as much data as possible, because that's what everybody's used to right now on a telephone. But we have to guard your information, my information, and the information of any piece of data that we collected in United States. BJS is also partnering with Denice Ross and her team at OSTP and with Ambassador Rice's team on the Domestic Policy Council. We just prepared a report to the President of the United States, never thought that would happen in my life, that will be delivered in a few short weeks that talks about the state of policing data in the United States and the importance of disaggregating data and making data available to people in a way that's usable for them in today's world. So that's a real big honor as well. So I think the point I want to make is that BJS is very relevant to your work, and the reason why there's a lot of discussion has been on education for high school and college. There's also the reinstatement of Pell Grant funding for incarcerated students. That's really important. I would also urge you to think about that set of students in the course of your work, because we need to help people have the skills to make them succeed in the world in which we live in. My work, as well as the work of other people, has shown the value of education, even while in prison, is associated with more successful reentry. I like saying that better than increase or lower recidivism. We should focus about reentry being a positive and not recidivism being the negative. So make sure that you think about that work. If BJS or any of our sister organizations within the Office of Justice Programs--within the Department of Justice can help you in any kind of way. The answer is we will help you in any kind of way we can to provide you the best, most reliable, accurate, and credible data that we can provide. Thank you very much for the privilege of your time.

REGINA: Amazing work. My question is, what are some of the issues that you have been confronting, particularly with respect to Latinos, that we have not--that we don't really think about? As you mentioned, we should be thinking about these every day. What are those? Thank you.

ALEX PIQUERO: Thank you for...

MALE: Okay. Could we just go through all the questions, and then we'll let the panel address it? Because it might be a more broad answer that maybe we're coming some other ones. So, okay, Enrique, go ahead, please.

ENRIQUE: There's a historical pattern here where Latinos are undercounted. So I'm very interested to see what ways this commission can work with you all here in ways that we can address the undercount.

MALE: Okay. And then we'll have one final question by another commissioner?

MALE: Yes.

PERSON: Good afternoon. It's really important work that you guys are doing with data and information and thank you very much for that. So I was wondering...

MALE: Would you get a microphone there?

ALEX PIQUERO: Here, you want to sit down? Okay. Sir, go ahead.

PERSON: Okay.

MALE: Okay. Thank you.

PERSON: Thank you. Thank you. So thank you for doing that important work with relation with data and information collection, I was just wondering if you are collecting

information regarding Latinos in the US with disabilities, and how deep and detailed is your analysis of that information?

MALE: Okay. Now, if the panel will address that or any closing remarks you have? Okay. Thank you.

ALEX PIQUERO: I'll take the first question from Regina since it was directed at me. It's been the bane of my existence as a criminologist for 26 years, predominately because those data historically haven't been collected in a manner to understand what people's race/ethnicity are. And we are only just getting there. And now there's a whole another set of questions about, let's say, hypothetically, an officer pulls over someone on the street, and they're supposed to collect race or ethnicity information. Do they collect it among what they perceive your race and ethnicity to be or do they ask you what your race/ethnicity would be? Because in many driver's license, they're not on there. So this creates a significant counting problem about what we know about the overall state of crime and/or victimization across race and ethnicity. We're getting better because more and more agencies are starting to collect those data. And I think when the census makes their penultimate decision going forward that will, hopefully, start moving everything in the right direction. But what we need is we need computing technology and record management systems to speak with one voice to make sure they're empowered to collect those data. And then when we distribute those data to the public, they're distributing it as similar way as possible.