

For immediate release
July 29, 2015

Contact: Jessica Yabsley at
Jessica.yabsley@datacoalition.org or [202-415-4025](tel:202-415-4025)

Press Release

Data Transparency Coalition Commends House Oversight Committee on vigorous leadership for spending transparency

Washington, D.C. - The Data Transparency Coalition (DTC) today applauded the House Oversight Committee for its hearing on the implementation of the Digital Accountability and Transparency Act of 2014 ([DATA Act](#)). Today's hearing, conducted jointly by the Subcommittee on Information Technology and the Subcommittee on Government Operations, validated the importance of the DATA Act as a transformative piece of legislation, bringing the government's spending data into the 21st century.

"Congress recognizes that making federal spending electronically searchable is the only way to make the government accountable to its citizens," said Hudson Hollister, executive director of the Data Transparency Coalition. "The DATA Act of 2014 provides a mandate for Treasury and the White House to impose the necessary data standards across all the spending information agencies already generate and report. Congress must stay engaged on what it mandated last year. Today's hearing showed the House Oversight Committee won't forget what the DATA Act requires and won't rest until it's done."

Today's Oversight Committee witnesses came from the three government agencies whose efforts are central in ensuring the successful implementation of the DATA Act. The witnesses included: Gene L. Dodaro, Comptroller General, Government Accountability Office; David Mader, Controller, Office of Management and Budget; David Lebryk, Fiscal Assistant Secretary, Department of the Treasury; and Robert Taylor, Deputy

Assistant Inspector General of Audit, Department of the Treasury.

The subcommittees focused their attention on four areas:

1. Chairman Will Hurd (IT Subcommittee, R-TX) urged Treasury and OMB to press agencies to quickly map their existing spending information to the DATA Act standards. Chairman Hurd expressed skepticism that federal agencies will require the full two-year period the law prescribes to match data from their existing financial and award systems to the 57 data elements announced last May by Treasury and OMB.

Chairman Hurd challenged Fiscal Assistant Secretary Lebryk: "For [my perspective] it doesn't take two years to map that. What is the deadline for the agencies to just identify those 57 pieces of information [data elements]?" Assistant Secretary Lebryk responded, "Agencies are putting small teams together. It doesn't take lots of people to do this. From that effort we'll have a much better sense of the level and degree of difficulty to get to that end stage... by end of summer, early September." Under Hurd's questioning, Comptroller General Dodaro testified: "I think that the agencies need to do the identification as you say. I don't think it should require a lot of resource to identify whether they have 57 data elements or not." Rep. Hurd concluded his round of questioning by offering to backstop Treasury's efforts to compel agencies to map their existing information to the DATA Act standards: "[T]his will be something that we continue to look at".

2. Chairman Tim Meadows (IT Subcommittee, R-NC) asked OMB to explain why its mandated pilot program to test standardized recipient reporting seems to lack any substance. Rep. Meadows challenged Controller Mader: "[OMB's] pilot program [as it's described to me] misses the target! It's a blob! It's not clearly defined."

Section 5 of the DATA Act requires OMB to conduct a pilot program to test whether the law's data standards allow grantees and contractors to compile and submit their federal reports more efficiently. OMB has designated the Department of Health and Human Services to lead the pilot for grantee reporting; however, no agency or entity has been appointed to conduct the contracts portion. Moreover, neither OMB nor HHS has explained when grantees or contractors will be invited to voluntarily use the DATA

Act data standards within official reports - a necessary step in the pilot.

3. Ranking Member Robin Kelly (IT Subcommittee, D-IL) pressed for government-wide anti-fraud analytics. Kelly questioned the Treasury Department's decision not to absorb the the Recovery Operation Center (ROC), the soon-to-expire Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board's anti-fraud data analytics center.

4. Rep. Tim Walberg (R-MI) pressed OMB on the need to match performance and spending on a program-by-program basis. Walberg urged Controller Mader to commit to a time frame for matching the list of federal programs that OMB must compile under the Government Performance and Results Act Modernization Act of 2010 to the program breakdown required by the DATA Act. Tracking both spending (under DATA) and performance (under GPRAMA) by program was a central recommendation of GAO Comptroller General Dodaro's testimony. However, Mader responded that OMB would be unable to make any firm commitments because the "same people" who would be tasked with program-by-program performance tracking are also responsible for implementing the DATA Act.

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About the Data Transparency Coalition

The Data Transparency Coalition is the only trade association pursuing the publication of government information as standardized, machine-readable data. Through advocacy, education, and collaboration, the Coalition supports policy reforms that require consistent data standardization and publication. Data transparency enhances accountability, improves government management, reduces compliance costs, and stimulates innovation. Representing a cross-section of the technology industry, the Data Transparency Coalition membership includes market leaders such as Teradata Corporation, Workiva, RR Donnelley, PwC, Booz Allen Hamilton, and CGI Federal and growing start-ups such as FindTheBest, Enigma.io, and Level One Technologies. For more information, visit <http://datacoalition.org/>.