



June 8, 2015

Honorable Richard Shelby  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
Subc. on Commerce, Justice,  
Science, and Related Agencies  
S-128 The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Barbara Mikulski  
Ranking Minority Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
Subc. on Commerce, Justice,  
Science, and Related Agencies  
S-146A The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby and Ranking Member Mikulski:

The undersigned members of The Census Project write to urge full funding of the U.S. Census Bureau's Fiscal Year 2016 budget request in the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies (CJS) appropriations bill. We strongly encourage you to reject ill-advised funding cuts included in the House bill (H.R. 2578), which we believe seriously threaten the Census Bureau's ability to continue modernizing the 2020 Census and preserve the availability of American Community Survey (ACS) data for all communities. We also urge you to maintain the mandatory nature of the ACS, to ensure data reliability and contain costs.

The President requested \$1.5 billion for the Census Bureau, including a ramp-up of \$317 million (\$663m total) for 2020 Census planning, a modest increase of \$15 million (\$257m total) for content and methodological improvements to the ACS, and a ramp-up of \$13 million (\$135m total) to prepare for the 2017 Economic Census. The House bill *cuts* the funding request for the Periodic Censuses and Programs account by 40 percent (-\$495 m), and wipes out the entire proposed increase completely, a reduction that is unsustainable at this point in both the decennial census and Economic Census cycles.

In FY2016, the Census Bureau must begin to "operationalize" the 2020 Census design through IT systems development, methodological refinements, and preparations for the communications campaign and language and telephone questionnaire assistance, all in time for an end-to-end readiness test in 2018. New initiatives, including an unprecedented use of technology to collect and process census responses and reliance on administrative records to update the address list and reduce costly field

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visits, could *save more than \$5 billion over the lifecycle cost of the census*. But failure to invest in thorough development activities now could force the bureau to abandon some or all of these reforms next year, because the risk of fielding such sweeping reforms without complete testing is too high.

In a Statement of Administration Policy on H.R. 2578, OMB warned that the House Appropriations Committee funding level would “[prevent] the Census Bureau from developing, testing, and implementing critical cost saving innovations” for the 2020 Census. The Administration also cautioned that the proposed funding reduction for the ACS (20 percent cut from FY2015) threatens the availability of vital, irreplaceable demographic and economic data for rural communities, small areas (such as neighborhoods), and small population groups. The final House allocation would reduce these amounts even further.

The ACS, the modern version of the census long form, produces data integral to decision-making in the public, private, and non-profit sectors, ensuring that our nation can meet the needs of its citizens in a fiscally-responsible way, guided by objective, comparable and high-quality socio-economic data for all communities. We oppose language the House adopted that, essentially, would make response to our nation’s premier civic survey optional. ***Census Bureau field tests and the recent Canadian experience have shown that making response voluntary will lead to dramatically lower response rates, significantly higher costs (+90m/yr), and the possible loss of all reliable data for smaller (less populous) geographic areas, including rural counties, small cities, towns, neighborhoods and American Indian reservations.*** We urge you to reject this provision.

The Census Bureau is working hard to streamline the ACS and reduce response burden. It recently announced the elimination of two questions, and revisions to others; it also is researching the possibility of asking some questions less frequently or of a smaller sample of households, as well as replacing some questions with data collected through other government programs or by commercial entities. These efforts address congressional concerns about ACS burden, but thorough research and testing are necessary to ensure data quality because Congress itself allocates more than \$415 billion annually to states and localities based on ACS data. Funding cuts in the House appropriations bill would threaten the timeliness of this important review and be counter-productive.

We recognize the fiscal constraints your committee faces and believe that continued investment in modern census methods and operations will yield significant lifecycle cost savings. Failure to develop production systems

through a robust acquisitions process and to refine sweeping operational reforms in FY2016 and beyond will put the accuracy of the 2020 Census at risk and almost certainly drive up costs against the wishes of the Congress. Likewise, lack of adequate funding to maintain a robust ACS sample and coverage will deprive Congress, state and local governments, and the private sector of data that guide prudent investments, uphold civil rights protections, and spur economic growth in communities of all sizes. Again, we urge you to provide sufficient funding for all Census Bureau programs as you consider the FY2016 CJS appropriations bill.

Thank you for your consideration of our views. Census Project Co-Directors Phil Sparks ([psparks@ccmc.org](mailto:psparks@ccmc.org)), Mary Jo Hoeksema ([paaapc@crosslink.net](mailto:paaapc@crosslink.net)), and Terri Ann Lowenthal ([TerriAnn2K@aol.com](mailto:TerriAnn2K@aol.com)) would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Barbara Everitt Bryant, Director, U.S. Census Bureau, 1989–1993  
 Alan E. Pisarski, Author, *Commuting In America* series

*National Organizations*

AcademyHealth  
 African American Health Alliance  
 African American Ministers In Action  
 Agricultural & Applied Economics Association  
 Alabaster  
 Alliance of Filipinos for Immigrant Rights and Empowerment  
 American Association for Public Opinion Research  
 American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy  
 American Association of University Women  
 American Educational Research Association  
 American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees  
 American Planning Association  
 American Political Science Association  
 American Sociological Association  
 American Statistical Association  
 American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee  
 Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum  
 Asian American Federation  
 Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund  
 Asian American Psychological Association  
 Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC  
 Asian Pacific Policy & Planning Council

Association of Academic Survey Research Organizations  
Association of Population Centers  
Association of Public Data Users  
Common Cause  
Council for Community and Economic Research  
Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics  
Decision Demographics  
Demos  
Direct Marketing Association  
FairVote  
Farmworker Justice  
Generations United  
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities  
Inter-University Program for Latino Research  
Japanese American Citizens League  
Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University  
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement  
LatinoJustice PRLDEF  
LULAC - League of United Latin American Citizens  
MALDEF - Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund  
MANA, A National Latina Organization  
Marketing Research Association  
NAACP  
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.  
NALEO Educational Fund  
National Apartment Association  
National Association of Hispanic Federal Executives  
National Association of REALTORS®  
National Association of Towns and Townships  
National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development  
National Coalition on Black Civic Participation  
National Congress of American Indians  
National Consumer Law Center, on behalf of our low-income clients  
National Council of Asian Pacific Islander Physicians  
National Housing & Rehabilitation Association  
National Housing Conference  
National Kinship Alliance for Children  
National Korean American Service and Education Consortium  
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health  
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund  
National Low Income Housing Coalition  
National Multifamily Housing Council  
National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance  
National WIC Association

National Women's Law Center  
 North American Regional Science Council  
 Population Association of America  
 Population Resource Center  
 Presente.org  
 Prison Policy Initiative  
 Public Justice Center  
 Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities Coalition  
 Research Advisory Services Inc  
 Research Allies for Lifelong Learning  
 Ribbon Demographics, LLC  
 SAALT - South Asian Americans Leading Together  
 SER-Jobs for Progress National, Inc.  
 South Asian American Policy & Research Institute  
 South by North Strategies, Ltd.  
 Sunlight Foundation  
 Tangible Consulting Services  
 The Cave Institute  
 The Jewish Federations of North America  
 The Voter Participation Center  
 UNITED SIKHS  
 United States Hispanic Leadership Institute  
 US Conference of Mayors  
 ZERO TO THREE: National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families

*Regional and Local Organizations*

A Second Chance, Inc. (Pittsburgh, PA)  
 ABG Consulting (ME)  
 Adhikaar for Human Rights and Social Justice (NY)  
 Alabama State Data Center  
 Alameda County Community Food Bank (CA)  
 Arizona Housing Alliance  
 Association of Central Oklahoma Governments  
 Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission (Green Bay, WI)  
 CamConnect (Camden, NJ)  
 Casa de Esperanza (MN)  
 Centre Regional Planning Agency (State College, PA)  
 Chippewa-Eau Claire Metropolitan Planning Organization (WI)  
 Crescent City Media Group (New Orleans, LA)  
 Dakota County Office of Planning and Analysis (MN)  
 Education Equals Making Community Connections (TX)  
 Families And Children Together (ME)  
 Haitian-American Grassroots Coalition (Miami, FL)

Housing Consortium of Everett and Snohomish County (WA)  
Human Development Services of Westchester (NY)  
Just Vote Illinois  
Long Island Housing Services, Inc. (NY)  
Louisiana Housing Alliance  
Maxfield Research Inc. (MN)  
MCH, Inc. (ME)  
Metroplan (Little Rock, AR)  
Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MA)  
Michigan Alliance of Latinos Moving Towards Advancement  
Michigan League for Public Policy  
Mid-America Regional Council (KS & MO)  
Mid-Continent Regional Science Association  
Mid-Region Council of Governments (Albuquerque, NM)  
Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce  
Minnesota Housing Partnership  
Minnesota State Demographic Center  
Minnesotans for the American Community Survey  
Papa Ola Lokahi (HI)  
Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children  
Punta Gorda Housing Authority (FL)  
South Florida Regional Planning Council  
Southeast Michigan Census Council  
Southern Coalition for Social Justice  
Southern Echo, Inc. (Jackson, MS)  
Spokane Low Income Housing Consortium (WA)  
The Community at Holy Family Manor/Nazareth Housing Services  
(Pittsburgh, PA)  
Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition  
Vermont State Data Center