



October 17, 2016

Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
S-128 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Vice Chairwoman
Committee on Appropriations
503 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Cochran and Vice Chairwoman Mikulski:

As you consider final Fiscal Year 2017 appropriations bills, the multi-sector, nonpartisan Census Project coalition¹ urges you to increase funding for the **U.S. Census Bureau** above the levels in the House and Senate Commerce, Justice, and Science bills. As the Statement of Administration Policy (June 14, 2016) indicated, funding below the President's \$1.634 billion budget request will jeopardize implementation of a modern, cost-effective, and accurate **2020 Census**, and preservation of a robust **American Community Survey (ACS)** that guides prudent decision-making and resource allocation.

Failure to provide a funding level for decennial census planning that is closer to the President's request could cost taxpayers billions of dollars, as the Census Bureau is forced to fall back on more costly but "tried and true" counting methods. Alternatively, the Bureau would have to forge ahead with sweeping operational reforms that have not been fully tested. Also at risk are activities such as the communications campaign and partnership program, designed to reach historically hard-to-count population groups, including rural residents, immigrants, people of color, and young children. The Census Bureau cannot meet the congressional goal of keeping 2020 Census costs at the 2010 Census level while maintaining accuracy, without sufficient investment in final testing, operational and IT development, and timely field preparations.

In FY2017, the Census Bureau must make final design decisions in advance of the 2018 End-to-End Census Test, when all systems and operations are integrated in a census-like environment. It must acquire space and build infrastructure for six Regional Census Centers, and begin a congressionally required program to update address and spatial data in partnership with state and local governments. Other critical 2020 Census activities in FY2017 include:

- expanded work to update the master address list and spatial (mapping) information using new, cost-effective methods;

¹ The Census Project (www.thecensusproject.org) is a long-standing coalition of diverse census stakeholders that includes state and local governments, business and industry, civil rights and labor groups, housing and child advocates, and research and professional organizations that support an accurate and comprehensive census and ACS.

- build-out of all IT systems in time for the End-to-End Test;
- the 2017 Census Test, which will assess reengineered Update/Enumerate methods for rural and remote areas (including American Indian lands) for the first time;
- the 2017 Puerto Rico Census Test — the first field test of operations in the Commonwealth;
- submission of 2020 Census and ACS topics to Congress, as required by law;
- further refinement and final decisions on 2020 Census question wording, including a revised question on race and ethnicity; and
- development of the Integrated Communications Campaign and Partnership Program, with a focus on market segmentation and overall planning.

The Census Bureau cannot implement these activities in a thorough and timely way without sufficient funding in FY2017. Equally important, it cannot reclaim lost time and compensate for reduced scope of final tests and early preparations at this point in the cycle. The Bureau also could be forced to scale back other vital programs, most notably the ACS and 2017 Economic Census, as it tries to maintain a reasonable glide path to the 2020 Census with inadequate funding. For the ACS, funding shortfalls could lead to reduced sample size or curtailed follow-up activities, which would diminish the reliability or even availability of data for less populous areas (such as rural communities) and small population groups, such as persons with disabilities and veterans.

The Census Bureau continues to identify insufficient funding as the greatest risk it faces in the short time remaining until the 2020 Census. It must establish full confidence in new methods and operations before deployment in the census. It must develop a flexible, targeted communications campaign to reach an increasingly diverse population, in order to meet the U.S. Constitution’s mandate for an accurate count of *all* residents every ten years.

In closing, we urge Congress to fund the Census Bureau as close to the President’s budget request of \$1.634 billion as possible, including \$778 million for the 2020 Census and \$251 million for the American Community Survey, in the final FY2017 CJS Appropriations bill. Please feel free to contact Census Project Co-Director Mary Jo Hoeksema (maryjo@popassoc.org) if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Children and Youth	MD
American Sociological Association	
American Statistical Association	
APACE C4	Seattle, WA
APDU: The Association of Public Data Users	
Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF)	
Asian Americans Advancing Justice AAJC	
Association of Academic Survey Research Organizations (AASRO)	
Association of Population Centers	
Capital District Regional Planning Commission	Albany NY
Civil Survival	Seattle, WA

Consortium of Social Science Associations	
Council for Community and Economic Research	
Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics	
Decision Demographics	
Feeding America	
Housing Consortium of Everett & Snohomish County	Everett, WA
Kansas Action for Children	
Marion County Commission on Youth, Inc. (MCCOY)	Indianapolis, IN
Marketing Research Association	
Michigan League for Public Policy	
Midwest Political Science Association	
Minnesota Council on Foundations	
Minnesota State Demographic Center	
Minnesotans for the American Community Survey	
NAACP	
NALEO Educational Fund	
National Asian Pacific American Bar Association	
National Association of Home Builders	
National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA)	
National Council of Jewish Women	
National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) Seattle Section	WA
National Housing Conference	
National Low Income Housing Coalition	
National WIC Association	
Nazareth Housing Services	Pittsburgh, PA
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice	
Nielsen	
OCA – Asian Pacific American Advocates	
Office of Performance and Analysis	Dakota County, MN
OneAmerica	Seattle, WA
Partnership for America's Children	
Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children	
Population Association of America	
Prison Policy Initiative	

Public Justice Center	
Research Allies for Lifelong Learning	
Ribbon Demographics, LLC	Brunswick, ME
RLS Demographics, Inc.	Rensselaerville, NY
Southeast Michigan Census Council	
State Voices	
The City of Charlotte's Data and Analytics Program	NC
The Jewish Federations of North America	
Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition	
VOICES for Alabama's Children	
Westchester Children's Association	White Plains, NY