



April 13, 2015

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

Honorable Barbara Mikulski
 Vice Chairwoman
 Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, and Science, and
 Related Agencies
 Committee on Appropriations
 S-128 The Capitol
 Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby and Vice Chairwoman Mikulski:

As you consider federal agency funding for Fiscal Year 2016, we respectfully urge your support for the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS), a unique program that is central to our ability, as business leaders, to promote economic development and growth and guide the prudent investment of resources in the communities we serve.

Business and industry rely on accurate, comprehensive census and ACS data to spur economic development, sustain and create jobs, revitalize communities, allocate resources, invest wisely, compete globally, provide value to customers, develop strategy, guide operations, and more. In fact, the broad range of Census Bureau data — including from the decennial census, ACS, and economic surveys — are the foundation for sound decisions that strengthen the private sector’s role as an economic engine vital to thriving communities.

The ACS is part of the mandatory decennial census and is used to ensure the continued collection of reliable socioeconomic data that are the basis for critical decision-making in both the private and public sectors. Cutting funding for the ACS, or making response voluntary, would destroy the quality of data that decision-makers in the public and private sectors rely on every day to make vital choices about the allocation of resources, investments and the direction of policy.

ACS data are required to implement federal laws and allocate federal program funds, but they are also an irreplaceable tool for business, industry, and our local government partners in virtually

every American community. There simply is no other source of high-quality, detailed socio-economic information that is comparable across time and geography, allowing us to analyze current and trending markets and community needs and to plan future investments accordingly. And, the unique comparability of the ACS down to the neighborhood and census-tract levels allows users to actually compare areas like downtown New York City with rural Kentucky.

Making response to the ACS voluntary would diminish the quality of the vital data it yields. The cost of maintaining sufficient standards of accuracy for ACS data if response were voluntary is significant. A 2003 report to Congress concluded that accuracy would drop dramatically and an analysis found that costs would jump \$90-\$100 million per year if response were no longer mandatory.

The ACS is vitally important to business and industry in this country. We use the ACS data to make decisions on a daily basis concerning investment in new facilities, the availability of qualified workers and the need for job training programs, the characteristics (such as language preference, disability, veterans status and type of housing) of the communities we serve, and the need for new plants, stores and other places of business. Reliable information about population growth and density leads to the opening of new businesses in the best possible locations to serve the immediate needs of communities, helping create jobs.

Sincerely,

American Planning Association
Appraisal Institute
CCIM Institute
Council for Community and Economic Research
Direct Marketing Association
Institute of Real Estate Management
International Council of Shopping Centers
Internet Association
Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University
Marketing Research Association
National Apartment Association
National Association for Business Economics
National Association of Home Builders
National Association of Real Estate Investment Trusts®
National Association of REALTORS®
National Automobile Dealers Association
National Multifamily Housing Council
National Restaurant Association
National Retail Federation (NRF)
Retail Industry Leaders Association (RILA)
U.S. Chamber of Commerce