



July 29, 2014

Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
S-128 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Richard Shelby
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Appropriations
S-146A The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Mikulski and Ranking Member Shelby:

Given the uncertainty of final action before October 1, 2014, on the FY2015 Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations bill, we write to urge a funding *anomaly* for the U.S. Census Bureau in the event of a Continuing Funding Resolution. *The Census Bureau's ability to complete 2020 Census research and testing of cost-saving innovations and design updates, including content review for the American Community Survey, and to begin systems and operational development, on schedule, will be at high risk without a "ramp up" in funding at the start of Fiscal Year 2015.*

The Census Bureau already has scaled back or postponed key planning activities for the 2020 Census due, in large part, to previous budget cuts and funding delays. In FY2015, the Bureau will conduct four major field tests designed to evaluate, in census-like environments, promising but complex innovations to improve enumeration efficiency and streamline field operations. Specifically, the tests will assess:

- feasibility of replacing universal pre-census address canvassing with targeted verification of the Master Address File;
- using automation, real-time data, and administrative records to manage and streamline costly door-to-door follow-up with unresponsive households;
- new strategies to boost self-response, especially on the Internet, as well as methods for pre-registration and processing electronic responses that lack unique identifiers;
- revised questions on race and ethnicity;
- language assistance for non-English speakers; and

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- improving estimates of mail, on-line, and telephone response, to better control overall costs.

These new initiatives will modernize the census process and reduce costs substantially, but they require thorough testing and evaluation before the Census Bureau can select an optimal design for a cost-effective and accurate census. The bureau must make that decision and begin development of IT and operational infrastructure by the end of FY2015.

Also in 2015, the Census Bureau must complete a comprehensive review of American Community Survey questions, in preparation for a National Content Test that will inform its required submission to Congress of ACS questions. This review directly addresses congressional concerns about ACS response burden and will ensure that this seminal survey only collects data required for the administration of federal laws and programs. Finally, a funding ramp-up is necessary to begin planning for the 2017 Economic Census, the nation's most comprehensive measurement of economic activity and the foundation for leading economic indicators (including Gross Domestic Product) that inform public and private sector fiscal decisions and investment in America's economic future.

Robust and timely 2020 Census planning requires modest but steady funding increases each year. A lack of adequate resources and the uncertainty of final funding levels may well force the Census Bureau to delay, scale back, or even cancel critical field tests, putting at risk the full range of design innovations that will save the taxpayer billions of dollars over the census lifecycle. The uncertainty that accompanies a Continuing Resolution simply does not lend itself to the Census Bureau's unique, cyclical programs, one of which is mandated directly by the U.S. Constitution.

Therefore, we urge you to include funding for the Census Bureau in a Continuing Resolution at the level approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee (which itself reflects a five percent cut from the President's budget request and a seven percent cut in 2020 Census funding). Failure to grant an exception from flat-line funding will jeopardize the Census Bureau's ability to plan a cost-effective, modern, and accurate 2020 Census.

Thank you for your attention to our concerns.

Sincerely,

ABG Consulting
American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR)
American Sociological Association

American Statistical Association
 Arizona Housing Alliance
 Asian American Federation
 Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund
 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
 Capital Area Food Bank
 Center for Governmental Research
 Connecticut Association for Human Services
 Consortium of Social Science Associations
 Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics
 Crescent City Media Group (La.)
 Decision Demographics
 Demos
 Direct Marketing Association
 FairVote - The Center for Voting and Democracy
 Hmong National Development, Inc.
 Housing Authority of Washington County (Md.)
 Housing Consortium of Everett & Snohomish County (Wash.)
 Long Island Housing Services, Inc. (N.Y.)
 MACS-Minnesotans for the American Community Survey
 Marketing Research Association (MRA)
 Maxfield Research Inc.
 Mid-Region Council of Governments (N.M.)
 Midwest Political Science Association
 Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce
 Minnesota Chamber of Commerce
 Minnesota Council on Foundations
 Minnesota State Demographic Center
 National Apartment Association
 National Association for Business Economics
 National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO)
 Educational Fund
 National Association of Towns and Townships
 National Council of Asian Pacific Islander Physicians
 National Council of Housing Market Analysts
 National Housing & Rehabilitation Association
 National Housing Conference
 National Housing Law Project
 National Multifamily Housing Council
 National WIC Association

Nazareth Housing Services (Pa.)
Palo Alto Medical Foundation Research Institute (Calif.)
Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children
Population Association of America
Population Resource Center
Prison Policy Initiative
Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities Coalition
Research Advisory Services, Inc.
Ribbon Demographics, LLC
South by North Strategies, Ltd.
South Florida Regional Planning Council
Southeast Michigan Census Council
Spokane Low Income Housing Consortium (Wash.)
Tangible LLC
Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition
William C. Velasquez Institute