



September 10, 2015

Honorable Harold Rogers
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
H-305 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth H.O.B.
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Lowey:

We, the undersigned members of The Census Project, are writing to express our deep concern about funding for the 2020 Census at this critical juncture in the decennial planning process. *The nation's largest, most complex peacetime mobilization requires a ramp-up in funding to ensure that planning and preparations stay on schedule. Yet, the House voted to cut funding for Periodic Censuses and Programs, while the Senate Appropriations Committee approved less than six percent of the President's requested budget increase. The prospect of insufficient resources, plus the uncertainty that accompanies a likely Continuing Resolution, make it difficult to sustain robust, comprehensive planning for the constitutionally mandated population enumeration and the collection of reliable American Community Survey (ACS) data for all communities.*

We understand that your committee faces difficult choices with respect to prioritizing many important public initiatives. Mindful of the escalating cost of the decennial census, Congress has directed the Census Bureau to conduct the 2020 Census for less than the cost of the 2010 Census. *However, the bureau cannot achieve this goal without an investment now in testing and development of sweeping reforms to census methods, to ensure operational feasibility while maintaining accuracy.*

The Statement of Administration Policy on the FY2016 Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations bill includes an alarming warning about the consequences of inadequate funding for the 2020 Census, ACS, and other vital Census Bureau programs:

The reductions in the bill would curtail critical testing, scale-up, and implementation of efforts to improve the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the 2020 Census ... The bill could also force Census to make drastic cuts to other bedrock sources of economic and social indicators.

While many of the bureau's new initiatives for 2020 are promising and could result, collectively, in up to \$5 billion in savings, the opportunity to demonstrate the quality of

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these reforms and build the infrastructure necessary to implement them will be lost if Congress does not provide a sufficient *ramp up* in funding next year. The proposed House and Senate allocations for the 2020 Census already threaten the viability of these new initiatives and could undermine efforts to modernize the census in any significant way without jeopardizing the accuracy of the enumeration of harder-to-count population groups, including rural and low-income residents, people of color, immigrants, and young children.

The Census Bureau must conduct an end-to-end readiness test in 2018, using the IT systems and operational design it will deploy in 2020. Field tests in Los Angeles County, CA, and Harris County, TX, in 2016 will provide critical opportunities to refine new methods for boosting self-response (especially via the Internet), automating the field infrastructure and operations, and streamlining Nonresponse Follow-up (NRFU) procedures. Already at risk of cancellation under the proposed House and Senate funding levels is a nationwide field test of the targeted address canvassing initiative, as well as testing of a Bring Your Own Device option for census takers. The bureau also must begin development of critical design elements that will help encourage self-response — such as a robust, nimble communications campaign; language assistance; telephone questionnaire assistance; and the Partnership Program — that are key to reducing census costs, especially in historically low-response areas. Final evaluations of questionnaire content also must take place next year, to prepare for submission to Congress under Title 13, United States Code, in 2017.

Therefore, we urge your committee to provide a level of funding much closer to the Administration's FY2016 request, as Congress and the Administration work to resolve the broader budget issues that will allow you to complete the appropriations process for the upcoming fiscal year. Reduced or flat funding for the 2020 Census could force the bureau to delay, once again, critical components of the planning process or scale back other vital programs, such as the American Community Survey and 2017 Economic Census ramp-up, in an effort to preserve a robust planning schedule for the decennial census.

Failure to provide sufficient, timely funding will jeopardize the Census Bureau's ability to plan a cost-effective, modern, and accurate 2020 Census, the nation's largest peacetime activity and the foundation of our democracy. Thank you for considering our views and the importance of our request.

Sincerely,

Barbara Everitt Bryant, Ph.D and Director U.S. Census 1989-1993
 American Agricultural Economics Association
 American Association for Public Opinion Research
 American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy
 American Association of University Women (AAUW)
 American Educational Research Association
 American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees
 American Sociological Association
 American Statistical Association
 Arizona Housing Alliance (AZ)
 Association of Population Centers
 Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis (MN)

Community Action, Inc. (MA)
Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics
Crescent City Media Group (LA)
Dakota County, MN (MN)
Decision Demographics
Demos
Direct Marketing Association
Family Equality Council
International Downtown Association
League of United Latin American Citizens
Long Island Housing Services, Inc. (NY)
Marketing Research Association
Maxfield Research and Consulting, LLC
Michigan League for Public Policy (MI)
Mid-America Regional Council
Midwest Political Science Association
Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce (MN)
Minnesota Chamber of Commerce (MN)
Minnesota Council on Foundations (MN)
Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (MN)
Minnesota State Demographic Center (MN)
NAACP
NALEO Educational Fund
National Apartment Association
National Association for Business Economics
National Association of REALTORS®
National Community Development Association
National Council of Asian Pacific Islander Physicians
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Low Income Housing Coalition
National Multifamily Housing Council
National WIC Association
Nielsen
Open Democracy Project (LA)
Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children (PA)
Population Association of America
Prison Policy Initiative
Public Justice Center
Quorum
Ramsey County, MN (MN)
Research Advisory Services
Research Allies for Lifelong Learning
Ribbon Demographics, LLC
SER- Jobs for Progress National, Inc.
South Florida Regional Council (FL)
Southeast Michigan Census Council (MI)
Southern Echo, Inc. (MS)
Spokane Low Income Housing Consortium (WA)
State Voices
Tangible Consulting Services

The Community at Holy Family Manor (PA)
The Jewish Federations of North America
Urban and Regional Information Systems Association
Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition (VT)