



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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401 Ninth Street NW, Suite 450, Washington, DC 20004
202.326.8700

www.TheCensusProject.org

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), Mary Jo Hoeksema (paaapc@crosslink.net), and Terri Ann Lowenthal (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
International Downtown Association
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