

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 11, 2018

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
S-128, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
Vice Chairman  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
S-128, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,  
Science, and Related Agencies  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
142 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,  
Science, and Related Agencies  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
125 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby, Vice Chairman Leahy, Chairman Moran and Ranking Member Shaheen:

As you negotiate final spending for the current fiscal year (FY), we write to respectfully request that you include \$4.456 billion for the Census Bureau in any upcoming FY 2019 negotiations. In addition, we reiterate the recommendations made by the census stakeholder community in a letter sent on November 28, 2018.<sup>1</sup>

An increase in funding over the amount recommended by the House Committee on Appropriations—\$3.199 billion plus an additional \$1.6 billion to be carried over and spent on 2020 Census activities in the first quarter of FY 2020—is necessary to ensure an accurate and well-planned decennial Census. The 2020 Census is rapidly approaching, and the Census Bureau is considerably underfunded compared to the past three decennial censuses at parallel stages in the planning process. In addition, factors—such as the untested, last-minute addition of a citizenship question—have jeopardized confidence in the otherwise apolitical decennial census. This requires dedicated funding to advance a communications campaign that reaches historically undercounted communities.

We urge you to provide additional funding of \$100 million for expanded targeted advertising and promotion as part of the 2020 communications campaign. This is necessary to counteract depressed turnout indicated by the Census Bureau's "2020 Census Barriers, Attitudes, and Motivators Study (CBAMS) Survey and Focus Groups: Key Findings for Creative Strategy."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Letter to House and Senate Appropriations Committees Regarding Final Fiscal Year 2018 Census Bureau Funding, The Census Project, 28 Nov. 2018, <https://censusproject.files.wordpress.com/2018/11/cplettertohouseandsenaterefy2019census11-28-18.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, "2020 Census Barriers, Attitudes, and Motivators Study (CBAMS) Survey and Focus Groups: Key Findings for Creative Strategy," 31 Oct. 2018, <https://apps.npr.org/documents/document.html?id=5026590-Oct-31-2018-Slide-Deck-On-2020-Census-Barriers>.

For example, the respondents to the CBAMS cited a distrust in the federal government's commitment to maintaining the confidentiality of census data as a major barrier to participation.

The Census Bureau has encountered delays in leasing and building out Area (local) Census Offices and failed to hire sufficient Partnership Program staff in a timely way. This significant delay already threatens the Bureau's ability to have an adequate number of offices and personnel to prepare for the 2020 Census. We recommend an increase of \$62.5 million to fund the number of partnership staff who can educate and mobilize states, localities, and community-based organizations in support of the census. It is imperative that the number of partnership specialists and assistants be increased by 500—from 1,500 to 2,000—and that they be on-boarded as soon as possible.

In addition, we are concerned that the Census Bureau failed to open an adequate number of Regional Census Centers and Area Census Offices for the 2020 Census, with plans to open half as many offices as compared to the 2010 Census. Unfortunately, it is too late for the Bureau to expand the number of primary offices, with such a limited time to lease office space and staff up each location.

However, the Census Bureau also does not plan to open any Questionnaire Assistance Centers (QACs). These centers could expand the bureau's field presence and help people complete their forms voluntarily in 2020 by leveraging community representatives who are sworn to confidentiality by law and trained by the Census Bureau. With a projected decrease in self-response rates—as low as 55 percent—it is imperative that Congress provide \$32.9 million for the Census Bureau to leverage this cost-effective alternative to additional Regional and Area Census Offices, opening at least an equivalent number of QACs as in the 2010 Census.

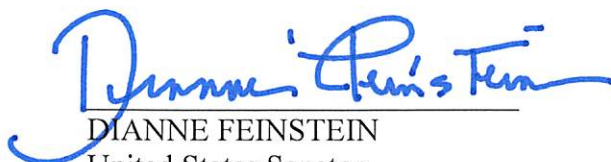
Lastly, we urge you to approve requests for additional spending in FY 2019 on vital activities based on identification of real-time risks and emerging threats, and to ensure that the Census Bureau has sufficient funding at the start of FY 2020 without shortchanging the Census Bureau's critical final year of preparations in FY 2019. We urge you to include a full-year funding for the Census Bureau for FY 2020 through an advance appropriation—which would not count against the FY 2019 budget cap—to ensure that the Bureau can begin implementing a full 2020 Census program.

An accurate count of all Americans is a constitutionally required activity, and we believe Congress should commit to an adequate investment in the decennial census. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,




BRIAN SCHATZ  
United States Senator



DIANNE FEINSTEIN  
United States Senator

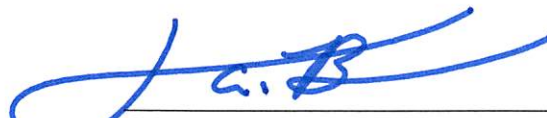
  
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United States Senator


  
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