

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 9, 2019

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 Moran and Ranking Member Shaheen:

As you consider fiscal year (FY) 2020 appropriations, we write to respectfully request your support for \$8.448 billion for the Census Bureau as a minimum funding level, with \$7.581 billion in direct funding for 2020 Census operations in the Periodic Censuses and Programs account.

The 2020 Census is rapidly approaching. As our nation's largest peacetime undertaking, the decennial census determines the outcome of apportionment, directly influencing the composition of our representative democracy. It also drives more than \$800 billion annually in federal assistance to state and local governments.

Our proposed 2020 Census request provides an additional \$886.7 million over the Commerce Department's FY 2020 cost-estimate of \$6.694 billion. This additional funding includes a \$66 million increase for Questionnaire Assistance Centers (QAC) in hard-to-count communities. It also provides an additional \$31.5 million to increase the number of Partnership Specialists from 1,000 to 2,000; \$100 million for expanded targeted communications; and \$689.2 million for Secretary Ross's recommended 10 percent contingency fund.

While technology, automation, and the growth of "big data" have kept census costs in check, the fact remains that counting 330 million people in a geographically and culturally diverse country is no easy feat. Congress can help ensure a fair and accurate census as required by the Constitution by providing the additional funding outlined above for activities most likely to reach hard-to-count communities and people: low income rural and remote areas and urban neighborhoods; frequent movers, including military families and young adults; American Indian reservations; young children; immigrants and migrant workers; households without reliable Internet access; and single parent households.

The additional funding is a responsible and necessary step in light of a lower projected self-response rate. The Census Bureau plans to use half the number of regional and local census offices compared to 2010, requiring an expanded use of QACs—partnerships between the Bureau and trusted community centers, such as libraries, community and senior centers, service

agencies, and houses of worship. Similarly, increasing the Partnership Program funding will allow the Census Bureau to hire additional staff—from 1,000 to at least 2,000—to educate and mobilize trusted community messengers. This would put the 2020 Census in line with the 2010 Census partnership level, and would help the Bureau to reach hard-to-count populations, such as low-income rural and urban households, persons with disabilities, people of color, and LGBTQ individuals.

The additional \$100 million for targeted advertising and outreach will help counteract new risks facing the 2020 Census, like cybersecurity threats, disinformation campaigns, and the digital divide. Targeted communications will help the Bureau’s messaging to address specifically issues such as the undercount of young children, the disengagement of young mobile adults, specific language assistance needs for some communities, and a fear of the government misuse of confidential census data.

The contingency fund will give the Census Bureau the flexibility to avoid disruptions in 2020 Census operations moving into next year. This covers the potential for extreme weather events, potential cybersecurity threats and disinformation campaigns, and the uncertainty surrounding the inclusion of a new citizenship question—as well as the projected drop in self-response rates as a result of the new question.

In addition, it is imperative that the Census Bureau’s non-decennial census activities within the Periodic Censuses and Programs account continue; and that funding for those programs is not cut. We request that the American Community Survey receives \$226.3 million and all other programs receive \$336.6 million. Our request also includes \$274.2 million for the Current Surveys and Programs account.

Without the necessary support, the federal government will not be able to meet its first constitutional responsibility. Failure to invest sufficiently in final preparations and early operations could depress participation and increase operational mistakes and failures in 2020, which then would increase census costs by billions of dollars when the census starts, diminish public confidence in the results, and put a fair and accurate 2020 Census in jeopardy. An accurate count of all Americans is a constitutionally required activity, and we believe Congress must commit to an adequate investment in the decennial census.

Sincerely,



BRIAN SCHATZ
United States Senator

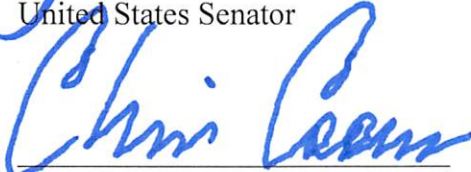

TINA SMITH
United States Senator


DIANNE FEINSTEIN
United States Senator


RICHARD J. DURBIN
United States Senator


JACK REED
United States Senator


TOM UDALL
United States Senator

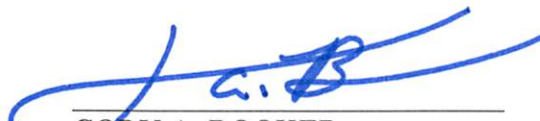

CHRISTOPHER A. COONS
United States Senator

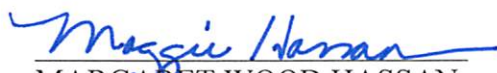

CHRIS VAN HOLLEN
United States Senator


MARIA CANTWELL
United States Senator


SHELDON WHITEHOUSE
United States Senator


SHERROD BROWN
United States Senator


CORY A. BOOKER
United States Senator

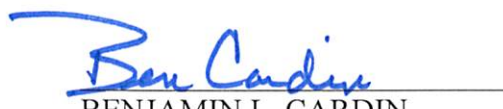

MARGARET WOOD HASSAN
United States Senator


DOUG JONES
United States Senator


KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND
United States Senator


THOMAS R. CARPER
United States Senator


JACKY ROSEN
United States Senator


BENJAMIN L. CARDIN
United States Senator



ROBERT MENENDEZ
United States Senator



MARTIN HEINRICH
United States Senator



ROBERT P. CASEY, JR.
United States Senator



KYRSTEN SINEMA
United States Senator



MICHAEL F. BENNET
United States Senator



KAMALA D. HARRIS
United States Senator



DEBBIE STABENOW
United States Senator



CATHERINE CORTEZ MASTO
United States Senator



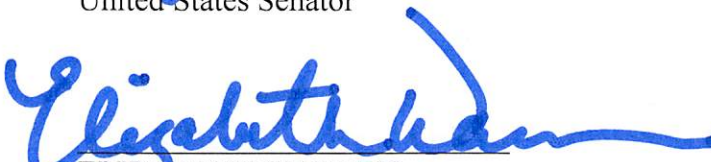
MAZIE K. HIRONO
United States Senator



GARY C. PETERS
United States Senator



AMY KLOBUCHAR
United States Senator



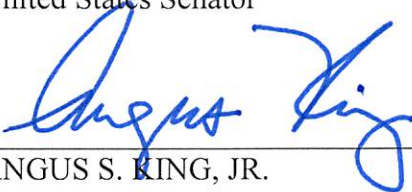
ELIZABETH WARREN
United States Senator



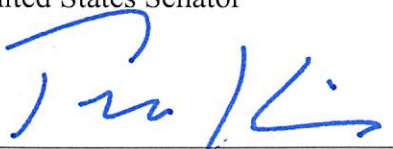
RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senator



BERNARD SANDERS
United States Senator



ANGUS S. KING, JR.
United States Senator



TIM KAINÉ
United States Senator



RON WYDEN
United States Senator