



April xx, 2019

The Honorable Jerry Moran  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jose Serrano  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science  
House Appropriations Committee  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robert B. Aderholt  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science  
House Appropriations Committee  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Moran, Senator Shaheen, Congressman Serrano and Congressman Aderholt,

As you prepare to consider the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies (CJS) Appropriations bill, we, the member and affiliated organizations comprising The Census Project ([www.thecensusproject.org](http://www.thecensusproject.org)), **urge the subcommittee to appropriate \$8.45 billion for the U.S. Census Bureau, including at least \$7.58 billion in direct funding for 2020 Census operations, in FY 2020.**

A year from now the 2020 Census will be in full swing, with most American households receiving their census materials in mid-March 2020. Fiscal Year 2020 is the last opportunity Congress has to provide the Census Bureau with the resources necessary to conduct a successful 2020 Census. Insufficient, delayed, or uncertain full-year funding for the 2020 Census at the start of FY 2020 jeopardizes the agency's ability to meet its constitutional mandate to conduct the decennial census and to do so inclusively, accurately, and cost effectively.

In its FY 2020 budget submission, the Trump Administration suggests it is requesting \$7.2 billion for the Census Bureau. For several reasons, this figure obscures and fails to meet the Census Bureau's true funding needs. First and foremost, the request is insufficient in large part because it assumes a \$1 billion carry over from FY 2020 of needed FY 2019 funds. As a result, the Administration is requesting only \$6.2 billion in direct new funding for the Census Bureau.

Congress did not direct the Census Bureau to hold any funds available in FY 2019 in reserve (that is, as a carry over) for FY 2020, as it explicitly did in report language accompanying the FY 2018 CJS appropriations bill. Instead, census stakeholders were pleased that in the report accompanying H. J. Res. 3, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2019, Congress clearly directed the Bureau to spend available funding on priority activities that "maximize self-response to the 2020 Census," including increasing partnership program staff, expanding targeted communications activities, and opening local Questionnaire Assistance Centers in hard-to-count communities.

Stakeholders believe strongly that the Census Bureau should be spending all of the funding available in FY 2019 (\$3.015 billion in direct funding and \$1.056 billion in "forward funding" from the FY 2018 appropriations law) to help address growing risks facing the 2020 Census, such as cyber threats,

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disinformation campaigns, the digital divide, and distrust of government. Further, the Bureau should be using this funding **now** to mobilize states, localities, and community-based organizations to ensure that vulnerable populations, such as young children, low-income urban and rural households, and people of color, are not undercounted in the 2020 Census. The Bureau also needs the resources available in FY 2019 to support a contingency fund, as Commerce Secretary Ross recommended, which will allow it to prepare for and address potential disruptions to census operations, including natural disasters, IT failures, and other unanticipated events.

Setting aside the proposed carry-over from FY 2019 (which Congress did not support), the Administration's FY 2020 request also falls far short of the projected funding needs set forth in the Commerce Department's revised census lifecycle cost estimate (\$15.6 billion). That in-depth assessment of the decennial census budget estimated a FY 2020 funding level of \$7.4 billion. Contrary to the Census Bureau's current assertion that it needs less money now because it faces less risk, challenges to a successful census have only grown since the Secretary Ross released that estimate in October 2017. Those include a tighter labor market, recent natural disasters (such as tornadoes in the South, flooding in the Plains, hurricanes in coastal areas, and wildfires in the West) and the mass cancellation of field testing in rural areas, military communities, and American Indian reservations.

Finally, the Administration's request doesn't reflect two historical census funding trends: 1) about half of the census lifecycle costs is spent in the census year; and 2) census year funding for the decennial census is at least twice the funding level of the prior fiscal year.

Given these factors, census stakeholders urge the subcommittee to provide the Census Bureau with \$8.45 billion in FY 2020, including \$7.58 billion in direct funding for the 2020 Census. Stakeholders support this increased funding, which represents approximately \$2 billion in direct funding above the Administration's request, to ensure the Bureau can support its other essential survey and data collection efforts, including the American Community Survey and Survey of Income and Program Participation—two surveys adversely affected by the Administration's request. A meaningful and substantial increase above the Administration's request is imperative to fully fund 2020 Census operations, enhance outreach activities to maximize participation in the 2020 Census, and support other vital ongoing surveys and programs that the Census Bureau conducts.

Thank you for considering our views regarding this important constitutional responsibility and for making the Census Bureau a high priority in the FY 2020 CJS Appropriations bill. We thank you for your past support and look forward to working with you during the subcommittee's deliberations.

Sincerely,