July 24, 2019

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

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

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

As the Senate Appropriations Committee prepares to consider its version of the Fiscal Year 2020 Commerce, Justice, Science (CJS) Appropriations bill, members and affiliates of The Census Project (www.thecensusproject.org) urge you to support a robust funding level for the constitutionally required 2020 Census. The Census Bureau has one chance to get the count right in all communities — there are no do-overs!

As you know, the U.S. House of Representatives recently passed H.R. 3055, which allocated $8.45 billion for the Census Bureau, which includes $7.5 billion in dedicated funding for the 2020 Census. This funding recommendation reflects what stakeholders believe the Census Bureau needs to conduct a successful 2020 Census, enabling the agency to meet unique challenges facing the nation’s first “high-tech census.”

In less than a year, the decennial census will be in full swing. By all accounts, the 2020 Census will be the largest, most difficult enumeration in our nation’s history. The U.S. population is increasingly diverse — geographically, culturally, and linguistically — with households becoming more complex, and a greater share of residents falling into “harder to reach” categories. Further complicating preparations and implementation, extreme natural disasters (e.g., hurricanes, tornadoes, wildfires, and flooding) will require modified, more costly census methods to ensure an accurate enumeration in recovering communities. In addition, the focus on Internet response will be challenging for communities without reliable broadband service and households lacking internet access or familiarity. The Census Bureau must have the resources to make internet response available in more communities and to offer paper questionnaire and telephone response options to anyone who prefers those methods. It also must be able to hire enough census takers to collect information in person and on time from all households that don’t self-respond.

www.TheCensusProject.org
To meet these operational challenges, we urge the Committee also to provide the Census Bureau with $8.45 billion in FY 2020. This funding level would enable the Bureau to invest in strengthening key activities — such as information technology, cybersecurity, and outreach to hard-to-count populations — necessary to conduct a successful 2020 Census. This recommended funding level would also support a contingency fund that the Commerce Department previously said it needs to address unforeseen circumstances that threaten the completion of a successful census, including natural disasters that occur during peak census operations.

The nation’s largest peacetime mobilization and very first responsibility under our Constitution requires substantial resources. An underfunded census would jeopardize the availability and validity of data used to make essential economic, political, and planning decisions in the nation’s private, public, and non-profit sectors over the next decade. To this end, we urge the enactment of a final bill by the start of the fiscal year, or, if necessary, a full-year funding anomaly, at the funding level we recommended, that enables the agency to support 2020 Census activities while Congress and the Administration negotiate the final FY 2020 CJS bill. Insufficient, delayed, or uncertain full-year funding for the 2020 Census could disrupt a smooth, expansive ramp-up to the start of counting operations in January, impeding the Census Bureau’s ability to meet its constitutional mandate to conduct the decennial census and to do so inclusively, accurately, and cost effectively.

Thank you for considering our views and for supporting a successful 2020 Census.

Sincerely,

National
Academic Pediatric Association
African American Health Alliance
African American Ministers In Action
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Anthropological Association
American Association for Public Opinion Research
American Civil Liberties Union
American Educational Research Association
American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)
American Library Association
American Pediatric Society
American Planning Association
American Sociological Association
American Statistical Association
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee
Americans for Indian Opportunity
Arab American Institute
Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF)
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - AAJC
Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance
ASPIRA Association, Inc.
Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs
Association of Population Centers
Association of Public Data Users (APDU)
Autistic Self Advocacy Network
Center for Data Innovation
Chispa
Coalition on Human Needs
Common Cause
Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA)
Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics
Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC)
Fair Immigration Reform Movement (FIRM)
FairVote Action
Faith in Public Life
Feeding America
Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)
Government Information Watch
Hispanic Federation
Human Rights Campaign
Insights Association
Institute for Constitutional Advocacy and Protection
International Business Machines
International Council of Shopping Centers
Laotian American National Alliance
League of Conservation Voters Education Fund
League of Women Voters of the United States
Mi Familia Vota
NAACP
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund Inc.
NALEO Educational Fund
National Association for Business Economics
National Association of Counties
National Association of REALTORS®
National Association of Regional Councils
National Black Child Development Institute
National Coalition for Literacy
National Community Development Association
National Congress of American Indians
National Disability Rights Network
National Education Association
National Health Law Program
National Immigration Law Center
National League of Cities
National Low Income Housing Coalition
National WIC Association
National Women's Law Center
NEO Philanthropy
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Nielsen
Partnership for America's Children
Pediatric Policy Council
People For the American Way
PeopleForBikes
Population Association of America
Prison Policy Initiative
Protect Democracy
ReadyNation
Seattle Indian Health Board
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
Shepherding the Next Generation
Sierra Club
Society for Pediatric Research
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)
State Voices
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
The National Association for Bilingual Education
United We Dream
Univision Communications Inc.
Urban and Regional Information Systems Association
Voices for Progress

State/Local/City/Regional
#WeCountOregon OR
Advancement Project California CA
Asian American LEAD Washington DC
Asian American Organizing Project St. Paul MN
Asian Services In Action, Inc. OH
Black Children's Institute of Tennessee TN
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Southeast Michigan Census Council Southfield/Detroit Metro Area MI
Stronger North Carolina, Inc. NC
Tangible Consulting Services MN
Texas Progressive Action Network TX
United Way of Columbia County Columbia County OR
United Way of Pierce County Tacoma WA
United Way of Pullman Pullman WA
United Ways of the Pacific Northwest WA
Virginia Civic Engagement Table VA
VOICES For Alabama’s Children AL
Voices for Virginia's Children VA
WA State Community Action Partnership WA
Washington Census Alliance WA
Washington Nonprofits WA
West Virginia Healthy Kids and Families Coalition WV
Win|Win Network WA
Wisconsin Voices WI