

United States Senate

September 10, 2019

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Room 128, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Room 146A, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby and Ranking Member Leahy:

As you finalize appropriations measures for Fiscal Year (FY) 2020, I request that you support the 2020 Census by ensuring the Census Bureau receives full funding for Decennial Census operations, at \$7.5 billion, before the beginning of the Fiscal Year on October 1, 2019.

As Ranking Member of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, I am acutely aware that the Census Bureau requires robust, on-time funding to complete crucial operations for the 2020 Census. Because of the constitutional and statutory requirements to conduct the census on schedule, the time-sensitive nature of final census preparations, and the need to ensure the Census Bureau does not face a funding shortfall during the enumeration, the Bureau must receive its full 2020 Census funding by October 1, rather than temporary funding. Without funding certainty at the start of the Fiscal Year, the Census Bureau will be unable to adequately plan for 2020 operations and could decide to curtail essential activities in order to prevent a shortfall.

In a hearing on the 2020 Census that my Committee held on July 16, 2019, Steven Dillingham, Director of the Census Bureau, described the complex operations the Bureau must complete in the next several months and emphasized that "Funding certainty is needed throughout the 2020 census." In the first three months of Fiscal Year 2020, October through December 2019, the Bureau must finish in-field address list verification and updating; complete final IT testing and cybersecurity operations; release nationwide advertising and communications strategies; and continue recruitment, hiring, and training for peak census operations field staff. The Bureau must also make final preparations to begin enumeration in remote Alaska by January 21, 2020, launch nationwide self-response on March 12, and conduct community outreach throughout the year. Adequate, timely funding will also allow the Census Bureau to reduce the risk of threats to an accurate census, including natural disasters, cyber events, and low initial self-response.

Full-year funding of \$7.5 billion is necessary for a complete and accurate Decennial Census. I previously requested this amount in regular appropriations for FY20, including funding for expanded communications and assistance in hard-to-count communities. The House Appropriations Committee provided this amount in its FY 2020 Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies Appropriations bill. As you finalize appropriations measures before October 1, I urge you to include this amount in any regular appropriations bill or any necessary stopgap Continuing Resolution for FY 2020.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please contact Annika Christensen and Michelle Benecke on my staff at (202) 224-1187.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gary C. Peters". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Gary" being the most prominent.

Gary C. Peters