



The Census Project

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Broad Array of Census Stakeholders Tell Congress Census Bureau Needs More Funding to Address COVID-19 Disruption

The Census Project details operations at risk.

Washington, D.C. – As the Census Bureau restarts field operations to complete the 2020 Decennial head count on an extended schedule, a coalition of Census experts requested that Congress provide contingency funding in the current fiscal year, and funding above the Administration’s request in FY 2021 funding to accommodate the COVID-19-driven changes to Census operations.

A total of 89 census stakeholder groups representing a diverse range of public and private organizations [wrote](#) to the leaders of the House and Senate Appropriations committees: “...As you consider fiscal year (FY) 2021 appropriations, we write to respectfully request your support for \$1.681 billion for the Census Bureau, with \$1.392 billion for the Periodic Censuses and Programs account and \$288.4 million for the Current Surveys and Programs account. Further, as Congress considers supplemental funding measures related to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we ask you to consider providing the Census Bureau with additional funding and the ability to tap contingency funds in FY 2021.”

Among the signers of the letter is an array of interests, from the United States Conference of Mayors to the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Gerontological Society of America, the National Association of Realtors, the Partnership for America’s Children and the National Association of Home Builders. The letter stressed that while COVID-19 has been a substantial disrupter to Census operations, it is not the only threat to a full, fair and accurate count. The Bureau faces many more historical threats.

“We understand that the additional cost of all adjustments to the 2020 Census operational timeline, as well as direct COVID-related costs (such as PPE for field staff, extra technology to support more enumerators, COVID-sensitive advertising, etc.), could total as much as \$1.5 billion. The Census Bureau intends to cover these additional costs by accessing its contingency fund. Census stakeholders are concerned that tapping the contingency fund will deplete the fund, leaving the Bureau unable to adequately address other emergencies that may jeopardize the 2020 Census, including natural disasters, IT failures, and, unfortunately, further waves of COVID-19...” the stakeholders wrote.

Census Project co-director Howard Fienberg said, “The virus is running the show, and the Census Bureau has needed to make significant adaptations to their long-planned design. That means local offices need to extend leases, workers will be needed longer than planned, and PPE equipment is essential to get public cooperation with follow up enumeration. Congress must give Census additional funds to pay for these remedies and so that the Bureau can keep rolling with the punches.”

According to Census Project co-director Mary Jo Hoeksema, “The good news is America is stepping up and responding to 2020 online at higher than projected rates. But many communities need special outreach efforts and operations to ensure they are included and we can’t leave them out of the national count.”

The Census Project (<https://thecensusproject.org>) is a broad-based coalition of national, state, and local organizations and companies that support an inclusive and accurate 2020 Census and American Community Survey (ACS) (the modern version of the census “long form”). Its 800+ member organizations and companies, representing the private, public, non-profit, and academic sectors, rely on objective data that the Census Bureau produces to inform evidence-based investment, policy and planning decisions.