

# United States Senate

June 23, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
H-232, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
H-204, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

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

Dear Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Chairman Shelby, and Vice Chairman Leahy:

As you work on the next legislative package to address the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, we strongly encourage you to include an additional \$6 million for the Census Bureau, with \$4 million for Demographic Surveys and \$2 million for Economic Surveys, to allow the Census Bureau to continue, extend, and expand the Small Business Pulse Survey and the Household Pulse Survey (Pulse Surveys). Through these surveys, the Census Bureau collects data on the impacts of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, including key health, social, and economic information.

As our country continues to respond to this public health crisis, robust and weekly data collected from the Pulse Surveys are necessary to understand the immense impact of this pandemic on every aspect of American life. Using the Census Bureau's existing survey infrastructure, the agency rapidly developed questionnaires and survey frames using the most reliable methodological approaches practicable to begin fielding data collection as quickly as possible. The Census Bureau, in consultation with other agencies in the Federal Statistical System, crafted relevant and timely survey questions to understand the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the American people and businesses. This data, in turn, helps policy makers to identify what interventions to make or what assistance to provide, especially as we turn to economic recovery.

The Household Pulse Survey collects information about individuals' experiences with a number of factors, including demographic data, employment status, spending patterns, food security, housing, physical and mental health, access to health care, and educational disruption. The Small Business Pulse Survey collects information about businesses with less than 500 employees and more than \$1,000 in revenue on a number of factors, including overall well-being, operational changes, challenges, finances, and outlook. The Pulse Surveys have already yielded important findings. For example, as of week five of the Household Pulse Survey, 48.3 percent of Americans have reported a loss in income from employment, and from the Small Business Pulse Survey, 71.2 percent of small businesses have received assistance through the Paycheck Protection Program, as compared to 38.1 percent in week one.

These surveys demonstrate the Census Bureau's ability to provide near-real-time data to inform policy responses. Providing an additional \$6 million for Pulse Surveys would improve the Census Bureau's capacity to continue the rapid provision of data to inform our responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic and public health recovery that will follow, while supporting relevant analysis on an ongoing basis as the pandemic continues.

As we draft legislation both to mitigate and recover from this pandemic, we must arm policymakers with necessary data to make the best decisions. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Brian Schatz  
United States Senator

Jack Reed  
United States Senator

Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator

Gary C. Peters  
United States Senator

Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator

Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator