September XX, 2022

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen, Chair
Commerce, Justice, Science Subcommittee
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran, Ranking Member
Commerce, Justice, Science Subcommittee
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Matt Cartwright, Chairman
Commerce, Justice, Science Subcommittee
House Appropriations Committee
 Washington, DC 20515

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

Dear Chair Shaheen, Chairman Cartwright, Ranking Member Moran, and Ranking Member Aderholt,

On behalf of The Census Project (https://thecensusproject.org/), a broad-based coalition of organizations from the private, public, non-profit, and academic sectors that support the U.S. Census Bureau's mission to produce full, fair, complete, and accurate data, including data from the decennial census and American Community Survey (ACS), we are writing to express strong support for funding the U.S. Census Bureau in Fiscal Year (FY) 2023.

We want to ensure that the Census Bureau receives the highest possible level of funding in the final Commerce, Justice, Science (CJS) Appropriations bill. Specifically, **we urge that the final FY 2023 CJS appropriations bill provide the Census Bureau with at least $1.505 billion—an amount approved by the House Appropriations Committee.** This funding (which includes $336,176,000 for Current Surveys and Programs and $1,169,294,000 for Periodic Census and Programs) represents a modest $151.5 million increase from the FY 2022 enacted level, as the President proposed in his request. The draft Senate CJS bill recommends $20 million less than the House funding level, a reduction we believe will prevent the Bureau from pursuing important cost-saving methodologies for future statistics in a timely way.

The Census Bureau—the nation's largest statistical agency—is at an important crossroads. The agency is still resolving the outcome of the 2020 Census, while simultaneously pursuing groundbreaking innovations and preparing for the 2030 Census. As FY 2023 begins, Congress has a unique opportunity to initiate multi-year funding for the Bureau, providing the agency with resources that it needs not only to sustain and strengthen its mission, but also to recover from years of postponed enhancements and pursue numerous necessary operational improvements to consolidate and integrate legacy surveys and

systems into a new, more nimble data collection and dissemination model. In particular, early decade investments in the decennial census will allow the Bureau to sustain critical capabilities and, as a result, reduce the risk of additional funding needs in the peak years later in the decade.

The amount approved by the House Appropriations Committee would enable the Census Bureau to address these ambitious priorities as well as others outlined in the Administration's request. These proposals include completing the data collection phase of the 2022 Economic Census, expanding partnership programs to improve census stakeholder engagement, and pursuing a variety of necessary innovations to modernize several existing programs and surveys, such as the Current Population Survey and High Frequency Data Program.

In the event ongoing discussions lead to an increase in the CJS subcommittee's allocation, we urge negotiators to provide the Census Bureau with additional funds beyond the $1.5 billion approved by the House Appropriations Committee. Stakeholders have identified several priorities that the Census Bureau could pursue, including:

- **ACS**--While the President's budget requested an additional $10 million to improve how the ACS measures sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI), census stakeholders and data users in the public, private, and non-profit sectors believe the ACS needs an immediate infusion of substantial funding to pursue other long overdue enhancements to the survey, such as increasing the survey's sample size, improving its non-response follow up operations, addressing steadily declining response rates, revising and streamlining content, and making other methodological and operational improvements. An [independent report](#) issued in 2022 by The Census Project urged an infusion of $100 to $300 million to protect the ACS from further data quality deficiencies and act on a long list of improvements to ensure the survey is accurately capturing data about the nation's increasingly complex population and households.

- **Population Estimates**--The significant operational disruption in the 2020 Census heightened concerns about differential undercounts of racial and ethnic populations, rural areas, and young children. The annual series of Population Estimates is a major opportunity to help mitigate the consequences of an inaccurate count, which is the basis for all subsequent annual estimates for the next decade. Census stakeholders have called for an additional $10 million to support expanded opportunities for cities, counties, towns, tribal governments, and other localities to help ensure the accuracy of their annual estimates. Half of the additional resources ($5 million) could restore the Population Estimates Branch to its 2003 funding and staffing levels and ensure that new data sources are part of the program's transformation. The remaining $5 million could allow each state in the Federal-State Cooperative for Population Estimates to have a dedicated full-time staff member who could assist all localities -- especially smaller ones -- within each respective state to participate in an expanded improvement program, without creating an unfunded mandate on local communities that need to remedy 2020 errors.

Thank you for considering the many challenges and opportunities facing the U.S. Census Bureau. We appreciate your consideration of our request and urge you to provide the Census Bureau with at least $1.505 billion in the final FY 2023 CJS appropriations bill.

Sincerely,

cc   The Honorable Patrick Leahy
         The Honorable Richard Shelby
         The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
         The Honorable Kay Granger