

Dear Chair Shaheen and Ranking Member Moran:

As the Commerce, Justice, Science (CJS) Appropriations Subcommittee considers its Fiscal Year 2024 Appropriations bill, we respectfully request that you prioritize funding for the U.S. Census Bureau by providing the agency with \$2 billion.

The Decennial Census is a cornerstone of our constitutional system of government determining reapportionment in the U.S. House of Representatives and the Electoral College. Census data helps the private sector make sound investments by identifying underserved or emerging markets and developing business plans and loan applications. Over \$1.5 trillion in Federal funding for healthcare, roads and bridges, education, first responders, rural businesses, and support for veterans [is allocated annually](#) to states and localities based on census data. Further, census data inform evaluation and research activities conducted by state and local government officials and scientists at U.S. research institutions.

Although the 2020 Census was just recently completed, the Census Bureau is already a third of the way into the 2030 Census planning cycle. Funding for the 2030 Census must begin “ramping up” early in the decade to support critical testing and operations geared toward achieving an inclusive, accurate, and cost-effective decennial census. Funding shortfalls during the last decade forced the Bureau to scale back strategic field tests—a decision that may have contributed to the less accurate counts of racial and ethnic populations, rural areas, and young children resulting from the 2020 Census. Investing in the 2030 Census now will allow the Bureau to sustain essential capabilities and schedules and reduce the risk of requiring unplanned, additional funding in the peak planning years later in the decade.

In addition to supporting enhanced 2030 Census preparations, the Census Bureau should pursue other operational improvements, including the consolidation and integration of older surveys and systems into new, more nimble data collections; research on the use of administrative records to reduce survey respondent burden; evaluation of new questions regarding sexual orientation and gender identity; and improvements in the Population Estimates program, which cities, counties, towns, tribal governments, and other localities use to assess and meet their communities’ unique ongoing needs.

Another central program in need of more resources is the American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS, which replaced the census long form in 2005, is the seminal source of timely, accurate information about our nation’s changing demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. Given the pervasive and comprehensive use of ACS data, census stakeholders and data users are urging Congress and the Administration to consider necessary enhancements to the survey and its operations to sustain its integrity. To highlight the significance of the ACS and its needs, we urge the Subcommittee to accept the following report language:

The committee supports the ACS and directs the Bureau to continue using the ACS as a testbed for innovative survey and data processing techniques that can be used across the Bureau. The Committee notes that the ACS is often the primary or only source of data

available to State, local, and Federal agencies that need adequate information on a wide range of topics. These data are especially important to small towns and rural areas across the country, and the Bureau should ensure that rural areas are covered with the same accuracy as urban areas to the maximum extent practicable. The Committee is aware of numerous recommendations census stakeholders and data users have proposed to enhance and modernize the survey's content and operations. Within 120 days following enactment of the bill, the Committee requests that the Census Bureau report on its plans for improving the ACS, including providing cost estimates and timelines for developing and implementing any recommended enhancements.

The Census Bureau faces many challenges and opportunities during this upcoming fiscal year, which with additional support from Congress would assist the agency's modernization plans to make it operationally more efficient and improve data product quality.

Once again, we encourage your subcommittee to make the Census Bureau a high priority in the FY 2024 CJS bill and to recommend the agency receive \$2 billion in FY 2024. Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,