

April 5, 2011

The Honorable Frank Wolf
Chairman, Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chaka Fattah
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Commerce,
Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Wolf and Ranking Member Fattah,

We write to you as a broad coalition of public sector associations, civil rights groups, housing and child advocates, professional societies, and research organizations, to urge your support for the Administration's Fiscal Year 2012 (FY12) request of \$1.025 billion for the U.S. Census Bureau. We believe this amount is the minimum necessary to preserve core statistical programs and ensure the continued reliability of data vital for public, private, and nonprofit sector decision-making now and in the future.

We know that Congress faces tight fiscal constraints and that there are many worthy programs funded through the Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations bill. Funding for the Census Bureau is a wise and necessary investment in the effective governance of our nation and preservation of our democratic ideals. The Census Bureau's work provides data essential to ensure, both directly and indirectly, the prudent and fair distribution of a shrinking pot of funds through many of the programs in this and other appropriations measures. Census and American Community Survey (ACS) data also facilitate the constitutional mandate of congressional reapportionment and are the basis for redistricting at all levels of government, as well as for determining the composition of the Electoral College. There simply are no other federal programs that fulfill these essential policy, programmatic, and constitutional missions.

In particular, the Administration's request is necessary to maintain the reliability of ACS data, begin planning for a cost-effective 2020 decennial census, conduct the Economic Census, research the use of administrative records, and continue implementing a supplemental poverty measure.

American Community Survey: The requested increase for the ACS is necessary to ensure that the sample size is large enough to produce reliable and useful data for less populated geographic areas, such as towns and rural counties, and smaller population groups, such as ethnic and language minorities.

Congress relies on ACS data to guide the distribution of \$485 billion annually in federal grants to states and localities. Preserving the accuracy of these data is a modest investment to ensure that these funds are meeting the needs Congress intended to address. Indeed, Congress has consistently expressed bipartisan support for replacing the traditional census "long form" with more frequent and, therefore, more timely data collection through the ACS. The FY2006 House Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations bill report noted that the committee "is steadfast in its support of the Census Bureau and the Administration's efforts to collect long-form data on an on-going basis rather than waiting for once-a-decade decennial long-form data."

ACS data are no less important to state and local governments and to business and industry. State and municipal officials routinely use ACS data for planning and resource allocation; most have no other consistent source of detailed information about the condition of their communities. Businesses report using ACS data on a daily basis to guide investment decisions, including where to locate new facilities and offer services.

In light of population and housing growth, an annual sample of 3.5 million housing units is needed to preserve the scientific integrity of the survey. The funding level also would allow for improved telephone and field data collection; 100 percent follow-up of unresponsive households in remote areas and small

American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian Homeland areas; and a comprehensive review of three-year and five-year ACS estimates. These activities are necessary to maintain valid and timely data about the nation's socio-economic and demographic characteristics through this unique and seminal survey.

2020 Census: For the 2020 census, early research, testing and development are essential to control costs and streamline operations. The Administration proposes continuous updating of the master address list and digital mapping system (TIGER) throughout the decade, an initiative likely to save hundreds of millions of dollars later in the decennial cycle, as well as to improve the accuracy of the geographic framework, especially in rapidly growing areas and rural communities. FY12 work also includes preparation of the information technology infrastructure, evaluation of methods to improve response rates and reduce non-response follow-up costs, and steps to streamline census operation components. As history has shown, insufficient funding for early decennial census planning will lead to ballooning costs later in the decade.

Economic Census: The budget proposal includes the 2012 quinquennial Economic Census. As our economy recovers from a deep recession, data from the Economic Census will help policymakers track the health of all sectors — including U.S. manufacturing, trade services, finance, construction, and transportation — and make further decisions to spur economic recovery and job growth.

For all of these reasons, we urge you to support the Administration's FY2012 request as a minimum funding level. Thank you for your consideration of our views and for your support of the Census Bureau's important programs.

National Organizations:

American Association for Public Opinion Research
American Educational Research Association
American Planning Association
American Sociological Association
American Statistical Association
Arab American Institute and Foundation
Asian American Justice Center, a member of the Asian America Center for Advancing Justice
Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund
Association of Academic Survey Research Organizations
Association of Population Centers
Association of Public Data Users
Association of University Business and Economic Researchers
Consortium of Social Science Associations
Council for Community and Economic Research
Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics

Demos
Japanese American Citizens League
Latino Census Network
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
Marketing Research Association
National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund.
National Congress of American Indians
National Education Association
National Institute for Latino Policy
National Low Income Housing Coalition
Nonprofit Voter Engagement Network
OCA
Population Association of America
Population Reference Bureau
Population Resource Center
Prison Policy Initiative
Project Vote
South Asian Americans Leading Together

Regional/Community Organizations:

Activists With A Purpose Plus, Grenada, MS
Citizens for Educational Awareness, Kilmichael, MS
Concerned Citizen For A Better Tunica County, Tunica, MS
Mid-Region Council of Governments, Albuquerque, NM
Moving Forward Gulf Coast, Inc.
Nollie Jenkins Family Center, Lexington, MS
Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada
Southeast Michigan Census Council
Southern Demographic Association
Southern Echo, Inc., Jackson, MS
SouthWest Organizing Project, Albuquerque, NM