



July 26, 2019

**2020 IS CENSUS YEAR!
Support a Robust Funding Level for the Census Bureau**

Dear Chairman Shelby, Vice Chairman Leahy, Chairman Moran, and Vice Chairwoman Shaheen:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 200 national organizations to promote and protect the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States, we write to express our support for a robust funding level for the constitutionally required 2020 Census. We urge the Committee to provide the Census Bureau with \$8.45 billion in FY 2020 to meet the numerous and growing challenges to a fair and accurate census in every community.

The Leadership Conference considers a fair and accurate census among the most significant civil rights issues facing the country today. Census data ensure fair, proportionate voting representation for all Americans. Federal funding for vital services, such as education, health care, and rural broadband access, is determined by census data. Further, census data assist federal agencies, like the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, in monitoring discrimination.

The U.S. Constitution gives Congress responsibility for getting the census right. However, certain populations and communities are at greater risk of being missed than others, including low-income households in rural and urban areas, young children, people of color, and immigrants. Additional populations, including older Americans and remote communities (such as American Indian tribal lands and reservations), may experience new or increased vulnerability due to an emphasis on Internet self-response and other significant operational reforms. Sufficient resources are necessary to support 2020 Census activities designed to improve accuracy in hard-to-count communities, which are located in every state. An underfunded census would jeopardize the availability and quality of data used to make essential economic, political, and planning decisions in the nation's private, public, and non-profit sectors over the next decade.

The House of Representatives recently passed H.R. 3055, which allocates \$8.45 billion for the Census Bureau, including \$7.5 billion in dedicated, new funding for the 2020 Census. We are grateful for your support in the Budget Act agreement for a one-time caps adjustment of \$2.5 billion for the 2020 Census, which will make it easier for the Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies (CJS) Subcommittee to allocate the same amount in its version of the FY 2020 appropriations bill. This funding recommendation reflects what The

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Leadership Conference believes the Census Bureau needs to conduct a successful 2020 Census and meet the growing challenges and threats that could undermine the enumeration, including cyber-attacks, natural disasters, growing distrust of government that could depress response rates in many communities, and the digital divide (especially in rural, remote, and low-income communities). The funding boost over FY 2019 is in line historically both with ramp-ups for a census year and the proportion of the census lifecycle budget devoted to the census year itself.

Our recommended funding level will ensure a 2020 Census that is equally successful in all communities by:

- Empowering the Census Bureau to invest in key activities — such as IT readiness, cybersecurity, and targeted outreach to hard-to-count populations — necessary to conduct a cost-efficient, on-schedule enumeration.
- Including a contingency fund that the Commerce Department previously said it needs, to address unforeseen circumstances, such as natural disasters and cyber-attacks, which threaten the timely completion of an accurate census.

We also urge you to direct the Bureau to spend more of its available resources this year (FY 2019) on expanded targeted promotion, outreach to vital local partners, and scaling and securing vulnerable IT systems, instead of holding back on critical preparations in order to carry over funding to FY 2020. Money spent wisely now will help keep overall costs down by boosting the likelihood of cost-effective self-response and reducing the possibility of IT failures and dangerous cyberattacks.

Finally, we urge the enactment of a final bill by the start of the fiscal year, or, if necessary, a full-year funding anomaly at the funding level we have recommended, which will enable the agency to support 2020 Census activities while Congress and the administration negotiate the final FY 2020 CJS bill. Insufficient, delayed, or uncertain full-year funding for the 2020 Census could disrupt a smooth ramp-up to the start of counting operations in January, jeopardizing the Census Bureau's ability to conduct an inclusive, accurate, and cost-effective census.

In nine months, the decennial census will be in full swing. By all accounts, the 2020 Census will be the largest, most difficult enumeration in our nation's history. The U.S. population is increasingly diverse — geographically, culturally, and linguistically — with households becoming more complex, and a greater share of residents falling into hard-to-count categories. Further complicating preparations and implementation, extreme natural disasters (e.g., flooding, tornadoes, hurricanes, and wildfires) will require modified, more costly census methods to ensure an accurate enumeration in recovering communities. In addition, the focus on Internet response will be challenging for communities without reliable broadband service and households lacking internet access or familiarity.

We urge you to protect and preserve the quality of the census and provide adequate funding at this pivotal time in the decennial cycle. The Census Bureau has one chance to get it right, and your support will help the agency achieve that goal. Thank you for your consideration of our request and concerns. If you need

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further information or have any questions regarding this issue, please contact Corrine Yu, Leadership Conference Senior Program Director, at 202-466-5670.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Vanita Gupta". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Vanita Gupta
President and CEO

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kristine Lucius". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Kristine Lucius
Executive Vice President for Policy
and Government Affairs