



December 5, 2022

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AAJC

Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
Chair
Subc. on Commerce, Justice, Science
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Matt Cartwright
Chair
Subc. on Commerce, Justice, Science
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Jerry Moran
Ranking Member
Subc. on Commerce, Justice, Science
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Robert Aderholt
Ranking Member
Subc. on Commerce, Justice, Science
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

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

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition of more than 230 national organizations committed to promoting and protecting the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States, we urge you to provide **no less than \$1.505 billion for the U.S. Census Bureau** in the final FY 2023 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies appropriations bill. This is the amount requested by President Biden and approved by the House Appropriations Committee earlier this year. It includes \$336,176,000 for Current Surveys and Programs and \$1,169,294,000 for Periodic Census and Programs — a modest \$151.5 million increase from the FY 2022 enacted level.

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 key programs, such as education, health care, and rural broadband access, is determined by census data. Further, census data assist federal agencies in monitoring discrimination.

As discussed below, adequate funding for completion of the 2020 Census and design selection for the 2030 Census — as well as for an American Community Survey that produces reliable, useful data for all areas — is a necessary and prudent investment in the effective governance of our nation and preservation of our democratic ideals.

2030 Census: The decennial census is our nation's largest, most complex peacetime activity, requiring modest but steady funding increases in the early years of each decade to improve census operations in a way that will save money over the census lifecycle. Early broad-based research and testing for the 2030 Census will help ensure that the Census Bureau can leverage emerging statistical methods, technology, and communications platforms, with the

President and CEO
Maya Wiley

goal of containing census costs by boosting self-response rates and supplementing direct counting methods with cost-effective, high quality administrative records.

American Community Survey (ACS): All census-guided federal spending relies on the ACS in some way, shape, or form; the ACS, in turn, is dependent on accurate decennial census data to ensure a representative sample and as controls for survey estimates. Unfortunately, funding for the ACS has remained relatively stagnant for years. Census stakeholders in the private, public, and nonprofit sectors widely agree that the ACS needs significant increased investment to bolster the sample size, improve follow-up with nonresponding households, and research alternative data sources that would allow the Census Bureau to reduce the number of questions, among other necessary operational and methodological improvements. For now, without adequate funding in FY 2023, declining self-response rates, coupled with an inadequate sample size, will jeopardize the availability of data for rural and small communities, American Indian reservations, and small population groups — including people with disabilities, veterans, and race and ethnic subgroups — without outreach and enumeration efforts to boost final participation rates.

Population estimates: In their respective reports accompanying the FY 2023 Commerce, Justice, Science appropriations bills, both the House and Senate Appropriations Committees directed the Census Bureau to strengthen the Population Estimates Program and expand the scope of the Population Estimates Challenge Program to help local governments mitigate the consequences of undercounts in the 2020 Census. We support these directives. The significant operational disruption in the 2020 Census heightened concerns about differential undercounts of racial and ethnic populations, rural areas, low-income households, and young children. Funding for the Population Estimates Branch is now below the 2003 level, yet the federal government allocates billions of dollars in funding assistance to states and localities based on the annual estimates, which are built from each previous decennial census. Congress must ensure that these vital Census Bureau estimates are as accurate as possible to help ensure prudent policy decisions and allocation of taxpayer dollars.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns as we work collectively to support a fair and accurate decennial census and useful, reliable data to inform decision-making throughout the decade. For any questions, please contact Meeta Anand, senior director of the census and data equity program at The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, at (anand@civilrights.org).

Sincerely,



Jesselyn McCurdy
Executive Vice President of Government Affairs