November 28, 2018

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20515

Cc: Senator Jerry Moran, Senator Jeanne Shaheen, Congressman John Culberson and Congressman José Serrano

Dear Chairman Shelby, Ranking Member Leahy, Chairman Frelinghuysen and Ranking Member Lowey:

Given Congress has convened a lame duck session to resolve, among other pressing matters, unfinished Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 appropriations bills, we are writing to urge that the Census Bureau receive $4.456 billion in FY 2019.

As you know, the Commerce, Science, Justice (CJS) appropriations bill, which funds the Census Bureau, is one of the outstanding seven appropriations bills. The House and Senate Appropriations Committees have approved their versions of the FY 2019 CJS bill, providing the Census Bureau with $4.799 billion and $3.821 billion, respectively. The House bill, unlike the Senate bill, directs $1.6 billion of its total to be carried over and spent on 2020 Census activities in the first quarter of FY 2020.

Throughout the FY 2019 CJS deliberations, census stakeholders have recommended Congress provide the Bureau with at least at $1 billion more than the Administration requested. The Bureau needs this funding to not only sustain current 2020 Census operations and other key census programs and surveys, but also to expand underfunded decennial census activities.

Census stakeholders suggest additional FY 2019 funding to:

**Expand targeted communications activities (+$100 million)** — Additional targeted advertising and promotion — the heart of the 2020 communications campaign — is necessary to help boost response in the wake of the funding shortfalls and anxiety about the addition of an untested citizenship question. Furthermore, the bureau should restore plans to launch early communications activities targeting hard-to-count populations in FY 2019 and should provide materials for an effective Statistics in Schools program. The Census Bureau has delayed the start
of the communications campaign from January 2019 to November 2019. This delay is short sighted and will leave the Bureau’s state and local government and nonprofit partners without a national framework for their own plans to educate their constituencies about the importance and safety of census participation. State and local efforts are important, but the census is a federal responsibility, and the Census Bureau must take the lead in communications efforts.

**Increase partnership staff from 1,500 to 2,000, and on-board them as soon as possible (+$62.5 million)** — Partnership specialists and assistants educate and mobilize states, localities, and community-based organizations in support of the census. These “trusted messenger” partners are especially critical in engaging hard-to-reach population groups, including persons with disabilities, low income rural and urban households, young children, people of color, LGBTQ individuals, and Native Americans. We have encountered numerous state and local officials and nonprofit/civic leaders who are organizing now to support the 2020 Census, and they do not have access to sufficient Partnership Program staff to assist them. The Census Bureau recently increased its peak Partnership Specialist hiring goal from 1,000 to 1,500, but it did not request additional funding and is not recruiting, hiring, and onboarding these staff soon enough to be sufficiently helpful to the network of partners the bureau will need to ensure a successful census. For the 2010 Census, the bureau hired 3,000 partnership staff. Our recommendation moves the 2020 Census program closer to the 2010 level of effort, as appropriators directed in both FY 2018 and FY 2019 report language and supports more timely hiring of a mix of partnership staff to ensure a robust, early partner engagement effort.

**Expand the bureau’s “field footprint” by adding Questionnaire Assistance Centers (QACs) during peak operations ($32.9 million)** — The 2020 Census plan calls for half the number of Regional Census Centers and Area (local) Census Offices compared to the 2010 Census and no QACs, which helped people complete their forms voluntarily in 2010. The significantly reduced field presence is simply insufficient given the Commerce Department’s lower projected self-response rate (as low as 55%) and new threats to full participation after that projection was developed. Stakeholders previously recommended increasing the number of local offices from 248 to 300 (at a cost of +$312 million), but it is likely too late for the Census Bureau to implement such an increase now. Instead, we recommend funding cost-effective QACs, where people can receive in-person help with completing their online or paper forms from trusted community representatives sworn to confidentiality by law and trained by the Census Bureau. There were approximately 30,000 QACS open part-time and staffed by one or more trained Census Bureau employees during peak 2010 operations at a cost of $27.3 million ($32.9 million in 2020 dollars). For 2020, QACs could open during peak operations in places like libraries, community and senior centers, places of worship, and state and local government agencies.

Finally, to ensure robust and uninterrupted ramp-up, preparations, and early peak operations, we urge Congress (1) to advance fund all or part of the FY 2020 appropriation for the 2020 Census in the FY 2019 bill, which would not count against the FY 2019 budget cap; and (2) to approve requests for additional spending in FY 2019 on vital activities based on identification of real-time risks and emerging threats to a successful census.

In sum, as you work to resolve details regarding the final FY 2019 CJS bill, we ask you to:
1. Provide the Census Bureau with at least $4.456 billion in FY 2019, ensuring that of this amount, $3.648 billion is spent on 2020 Census activities.

2. Provide enough funding in FY 2019 for the Census Bureau to carry out the expanded partnership, communications, and field operations efforts discussed in the Senate Appropriations Committee report accompanying the Commerce, Justice, and Science bill (S. Rept. 115-275) and supported by census stakeholders.

3. Ensure that the Census Bureau has sufficient funding at the start of FY 2020 — including certainty of its full-year funding level through an advance appropriation, if possible — to begin implementing a full 2020 Census program, without shortchanging the bureau in FY 2019, the critical final year of preparations.

Thank you for considering our requests and for your hard work negotiating a final FY 2019 CJS spending bill.

Sincerely,

ABG Consulting LLC
AcademyHealth
Advancement Project California
African American Health Alliance
Alabama Arise
Alaska Community Action on Toxics
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association for Public Opinion Research
American Educational Research Association
American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)
American Library Association
American Mathematical Society
American Sociological Association
American Statistical Association
Americans for Indian Opportunity
APA Florida
Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund
Asian American Resource Workshop
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - AAJC
Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO (APALA)
Associated General Contractors of America
Association of Chinese Americans, Inc.
Association of Population Centers
Association of Public Data Users (APDU)
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
California Association of Nonprofits
California Native Vote Project
Canary Consulting
Capital District Regional Planning Commission
Center for Data Innovation
Center for Law and Social Policy
Center for Native American Youth at the Aspen Institute
Center for Public Policy Priorities
Child Care Aware of America
Children's Advocacy Alliance
Children's Defense Fund
Children's Defense Fund - Minnesota
Children's Defense Fund - New York
Children's Defense Fund - Ohio
Children's Leadership Council
Children's Mental Health Network
Cities of Service
Claritas
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)
Coalition on Human Needs
Colorado Children's Campaign
Common Cause
Community Action Human Resources Agency
Community Home Trust
Connecticut Association for Human Services
Consortium of Social Science Associations
Cornell University Program on Applied Demographics
Council for Community and Economic Research (C2ER)
Council of Michigan Foundations
Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics
Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments
Crescent City Media Group
Decision Demographics
Economic Policy Institute
Education Equals Making Community Connections
Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC)
Equality California
Every Child Matters
FairVote Action
Faith in Public Life
Family Equality Council
Family Focused Treatment Association
First Nations Development Institute
Forefront IL
Hilmer, Douglas IL
Housing Action Illinois IL
Idaho Voices for Children ID
Indiana Philanthropy Alliance IN
Indivisible Hawaii HI
Insights Association
Interfaith Association of Northwest Washington WA
Japanese American Citizens League
Jewish Council for Public Affairs KY
Kentucky Youth Advocates DE
KIDS COUNT in Delaware
Kids Forward WI
Laotian American National Alliance
Long Island Housing Services, Inc. Bohemia NY
MACS 2020 - Minnesotans for the American Community Survey and 2020 Census MN
Maine Children's Alliance ME
Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies (MARPA) MA
Massachusetts Census Equity Fund MA
Massachusetts Voter Table MA
MassVOTE MA
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
Mercy Housing Northwest WA
Metro St. Louis Coalition for Inclusion and Equity, M-SLICE St. Louis MO
Metropolitan Area Planning Council Boston MA
Mi Familia Vota
Michigan Chapter, American Planning Association MI
Michigan League for Public Policy MI
Michigan Nonprofit Association MI
Michigan's Children MI
Midwest Political Science Association IN
Minnesota Council on Foundations MN
Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center Minneapolis MN
Minnesota State Demographic Center
Montgomery County (MD) Department of Health and Human Services
Montgomery County Community Action Board
NAACP
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.
National Apartment Association
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF)
National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE)
National Association for Business Economics
National Association of Development Organizations
National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund
National Association of Regional Councils
National Association of Towns and Townships
National Black Child Development Institute
National Coalition on Black Civic Participation
National Community Development Association
National Congress of American Indians
National Housing & Rehabilitation Association (NH&RA)
National League of Cities
National Low Income Housing Coalition
National Multifamily Housing Council
National Urban Indian Family Coalition
National WIC Association
Nazareth Housing Service
NC Child
Neighbor to Neighbor Massachusetts
NEO Philanthropy
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
New Mexico Voices for Children
Nielsen
Nollie Jenkins Family Center, Inc.
Nonprofit VOTE
Northwest Harvest
NYS Council on Children and Families
OCA - Asian Pacific American Advocates
Opportunity Finance Network
Partnership for America’s Children
Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans – PANA
PathWays PA
Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children
PeopleForBikes
PFLAG National
PICO California
PICO National Network
Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC)
PolicyMap
Population Association of America
Prison Policy Initiative
Public Justice Center
Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities Coalition
Research Advisory Services, Inc.
Research Allies for Lifelong Learning
Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
Ribbon Demographics, LLC
Right to the City Boston
RLS Demographics, Inc.
Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy
Seattle Indian Health Board
SER Jobs for Progress National, Inc.
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
Silicon Valley Community Foundation
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)
Southeast Michigan Census Council
State Voices
Sunlight Foundation
Tangible Consulting Services
The Children's Partnership
The Farmworker Association of Florida, Inc
The Jewish Federations of North America
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
The Minnesota Foundation
The United States Conference of Mayors
United Indians of All Tribes Foundation
UNITED SIKHS
Univision Communications Inc.
Urban and Regional Information Systems Association (URISA)
Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition
Voice of the Experienced
VOICES for Alabama's Children
Voices for Virginia's Children
WKF Fund
Women Donors Network
ZERO TO THREE