

April 21, 2026

Senator Jerry Moran
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Commerce, Justice, Science Subcommittee
Washington, DC 20515

Senator Chris Van Hollen
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
Commerce, Justice, Science Subcommittee
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Hal Rogers
Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
Commerce, Justice, Science Subcommittee
Washington, DC 20005

Representative Grace Meng
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
Commerce, Justice, Science Subcommittee
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Senator Moran, Senator Van Hollen, Representative Rogers, and Representative Meng,

As you work on the Fiscal Year 2027 Commerce, Justice, Science (CJS) appropriations bill, we the undersigned organizations write to support robust funding for the U.S. Census Bureau, specifically \$2.111 billion [as recommended by The Census Project](#) (\$99.5 million more than the Administration's budget request of \$2.011 billion).

The Census Project is a coalition of over 800 national, state, and local organizations representing data users and census stakeholders in the public, private, non-profit, and research sectors that rely on Census Bureau data to inform evidence-based investment, policy, and planning decisions, especially an accurate, cost-effective, and inclusive decennial census and American Community Survey (ACS).

2030 Census

The decennial census is the nation's largest civilian peacetime mobilization, determining not only apportionment of the U.S. House of Representatives (and state and local redistricting), but also the allocation of approximately \$2.8 trillion in annual federal funding. Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 is a crucial year in the decade-long ramp-up to the 2030 Census in which preparations and costs continue to exponentially increase.

We are concerned that despite a modest increase of \$110 million in the Census Bureau's Periodic Census and Programs Account in FY 2026, funding for the 2030 Census preparations remains behind the needed increase. [An analysis conducted by The Census Project](#) comparing inflation-adjusted funding levels in the ramp-up to the 2010, 2020, and 2030 decennial censuses confirms that funding for the 2030 Census is currently on the same underinvestment path as the 2020 Census.

As we learned in preparation for the 2020 Census, short-changing funding for testing and preparations at the mid-decade point introduces greater risk to a successful outcome. For example, when Congress failed to meet the Administration's requests for the 2020 Census the Census Bureau had to cancel every planned test in a rural area and on American Indian

reservations, including two of three dress rehearsal sites in 2018. After the census, the Bureau's check of its work showed a net undercount of 5.64 percent on American Indian reservations, and a net undercount of 2.58 percent in areas counted with a modified census packet delivery method called "Update/Leave," which is used primarily in rural areas. As this example illustrates, postponing preparations for decennial operations introduces greater risk to a fair and complete count of the population.

With Census Day 2030 less than four years away, we urge Congress to boost the current spending trajectory and provide the Census Bureau's Periodic Census and Programs Account with no less than \$1.723 billion—the amount requested by the Administration. Further, given the Administration's unexpected plans to dramatically curtail the 2026 Census Test, in which all sites on tribal land and rural areas were eliminated, we encourage Congress to direct the Census Bureau to release comprehensive data regarding the results of the 2026 Census Test in FY 2027.

Additionally, the Census Bureau should also be encouraged to fully fund the conduct of the Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA) operation, which allows tribal, state, and local governments to submit address lists and maps to the Bureau to help ensure universal coverage in the decennial headcount and reduce the scope of costly field address canvassing. This support includes providing the Geographic Support Program, which undergirds LUCA, with an additional \$20 million increase over its FY 2026 funding level.

Adequate support for decennial census preparations now will reduce the risk of requiring unplanned, emergency funding in the peak years at the end of the decade, improving the agency's ability to conduct a complete, accurate, and cost-efficient count in 2030.

American Community Survey (ACS)

In addition to fulfilling its Constitutional mandate to prepare for the next decennial census, the Bureau needs robust funding to sustain and enhance another facet of the decennial program, the American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS, an innovation which replaced the decennial census long form in 2005 during the Bush Administration, is a nationwide, continuous survey of about three and a half million households. It is the only source of comparable (across geography), consistent (across time), timely (updated annually) and high-quality demographic, socio-economic, and housing data for all U.S. communities down to the neighbourhood and census tract levels. Other than the decennial, it is the only government survey that makes it possible to accurately compare social and economic trends in downtown New York with rural Kentucky or any other locality. Data users in the private, public, non-profit sectors use ACS data every day to determine where and how to locate businesses and factories, build schools, hospitals, and roads, and target services to vulnerable populations, such as children, veterans, and older Americans. Scientists and market researchers use it to produce statistically representative samples for surveys and opinion polls. Further, ACS data are used to enforce civil rights laws and protect people from discrimination.

Years of underinvestment have degraded ACS data, precluded necessary increases in the survey's sample size, and shortchanged the Bureau's ability to address steadily declining response rates, revise content, accelerate research to reduce respondent burden, and make other improvements that stakeholders have recommended for years. To restore and

enhance the ACS as part of its FY 2027 funding recommendation, The Census Project urges Congress to ensure the Census Bureau invest \$300 million to sustain and enhance the ACS.

Other Census Surveys and Operations

In recent years, the Census Bureau released plans to modernize and restore, among other things, the Population Estimates Program, the Current Population Survey, and the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) and to keep its broader data collection and dissemination initiatives on schedule. Given the relatively flat funding level that the Bureau received in FY 2024 and FY 2025 however, census stakeholders fear that these initiatives are stalling. Flat funding for the Census Bureau at this juncture threatens the stability of these vital initiatives which, if fully supported, could transform how the Census Bureau performs and inspires greater efficiencies throughout the federal statistical system. Our request of \$2.111 billion would enable the Census Bureau to not only fully fund 2030 Census preparations but also pursue other necessary and worthy data collection and dissemination innovations across its other surveys and programs.

While we appreciate the challenges that the current fiscal environment presents, this is exactly the wrong time in the long-expected ramp-up to the 2030 Census for Congress to constrain funding for the U.S. Census Bureau. To reiterate, the agency needs robust, reliable funding, especially at this point in the decennial census planning process, to proceed with critical activities that will help secure the success of the 2030 Census. In addition, it needs funding to pursue and accelerate research that has the potential to reduce respondent burden, improve the quality, timeliness, and accessibility of federal data overall and to benefit other statistical agencies.

Our country and the economy are going through a period of unprecedented stresses. The comprehensive, nonpartisan and trusted official statistics the Census Bureau provides the nation are essential to understanding where we have been, and how we can plan for where we want to go.

Thank you for considering our recommendation that the Census Bureau receive \$2.111 billion in FY 2027. We look forward to collaborating with you and your colleagues.

Sincerely,