May 1, 2018

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Chairman
Commerce, Justice, Science Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jean Sheehan
Vice Chairwoman
Commerce, Justice, Science Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Culberson
Chairman
Commerce, Justice, Science Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jose Serrano
Ranking Member
Commerce, Justice, Science Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Moran, Vice Chairwoman Sheehan, Chairman Culberson, and Ranking Member Serrano,

On behalf of The Census Project (www.thecensusproject.org), a broad-based network of business, civic, and academic groups committed to a full, fair, complete, and accurate 2020 Census, we are writing to express support for sufficient funding for the U.S. Census Bureau and, in particular, 2020 Census activities in Fiscal Year (FY) 2019.

We respectfully recommend that the committee allocate $4.735 billion for the Census Bureau in FY2019 — $933.50 million above the Administration’s request for the agency, and $912.5 million above the request of $3.015 billion for the 2020 Census.

We appreciate the generous appropriation Congress provided the Census Bureau in the final Fiscal Year 2018 bill. Despite this support, however, funding for the Census Bureau, and especially 2020 Census preparations, remains below necessary levels, including the Commerce Department’s own revised decennial census cost projection for FY2019. Funding shortfalls and delays throughout the decade have adversely affected Census 2020 planning, compelling the Bureau to (among other revised plans) cancel two of three originally planned 2018 End-to-End Census Test sites (sacrificing tests in rural West Virginia and suburban Washington State counties), cancel all site tests in 2017 (including on two American Indian reservations), delay development of the Integrated Partnership and Communications Campaign, and revert to a paper-based Group Quarters counting operation. While the significant funding ramp-up Congress provided in FY2018 is helping the Census Bureau reset decennial preparations, many technical and operational challenges remain, making FY2019 the last opportunity for Congress to ensure
that IT systems, innovative methodologies, and new operations are in place for a successful 2020 Census.

With the funding the Administration has requested for FY2019, the Census Bureau would have resources to conduct essential 2020 Census activities, such as:

- completing all address canvassing operations;
- opening Area Census Offices across the country;
- finalizing IT systems readiness and security;
- recruiting and hiring approximately 76,000 personnel for “in field” address canvassing this Summer/Fall;
- launching the first phase of the communications campaign and making initial advertising buys; and
- developing the Census 2020 website.

Our enhanced funding recommendation would allow the Bureau the flexibility to increase the number of partnership specialists or assistants from 1,000 to 2,000; expand targeted advertising and promotion to hard-to-count communities as part of the Communications Campaign; and broaden its ‘field footprint’ through more local census offices or questionnaire assistance centers, thus ensuring a greater presence in every region of the country in light of a lower projected self-response rate. Support for these additional outreach and education activities is particularly important, given Commerce Secretary Ross’ recent decision to add an untested citizenship question to the 2020 Census—which could discourage participation among certain hard-to-count communities.

Finally, our funding recommendation also enables the Bureau to continue its other activities, which include conducting the ongoing American Community Survey and other demographic and economic surveys, and to establish a $300 million plus contingency fund as it has for past decennials in the event of IT failures or natural disasters, including hurricanes and wildfires, related to the 2020 Census.

Fiscal Year 2019 is a critical year on the path toward the decennial census—our nation’s largest, most complex peacetime mobilization. The census is one of the federal government’s few constitutionally required activities and is the basis for apportioning seats in the U.S. House of Representatives. Decennial census data are the foundation of our democracy, influencing a wide range of decisions in the private and public sectors. These decisions include the allocation of more than $600 billion in federal assistance annually, industry investments, and state and local government planning.

In closing, we thank you for recognizing the significance of the Census Bureau’s work as it prepares for the 2020 Census and continues its mandate to collect, disseminate, and share data regarding the changing demographic, economic and social composition of the U.S. population. We look forward to working with you and your colleagues to ensure the Census Bureau has robust funding in FY2019 to fulfill its vital mission and meet its constitutional obligation to conduct an inclusive and accurate decennial census.
Sincerely,

ABG Consulting LLC
AcademyHealth
Advancement Project California CA
American Educational Research Association
Alaska Community Action on Toxics AK
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association for Public Opinion Research
American Library Association
American Mathematical Society
American Sociological Association
American Statistical Association
APA Florida FL
Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund
Asian American Resource Workshop Boston MA
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - AAJC
Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO (APALA)
Association of Chinese Americans, Inc. MI
Association of Population Centers
Association of Public Data Users (APDU)
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
Canary Consulting IL
Capital District Regional Planning Commission NY
Center for Data Innovation
Center for Public Policy Priorities TX
Child Care Aware of America
Children's Advocacy Alliance NV
Children's Defense Fund
Children's Defense Fund - Minnesota MN
Children's Defense Fund - New York NY
Children's Defense Fund - Ohio OH
Children's Leadership Council
Children's Mental Health Network
Cities of Service
Claritas
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA) CA
Coalition on Human Needs
Colorado Children's Campaign CO
Community Home Trust                Chapel Hill    NC
Connecticut Association for Human Services          CT
Consortium of Social Science Associations
Cornell University Program on Applied Demographics       NY
Council for Community and Economic Research (C2ER)
Council of Michigan Foundations                      MI
Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics
Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments                Kelso     WA
Crescent City Media Group                              LA
Decision Demographics
Economic Policy Institute
Education Equals Making Community Connections          TX
Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC)
Equality California                                    CA
Every Child Matters
Faith in Public Life
Families USA                                           
Family Equality Council
Family Focused Treatment Association
Forefront                                              IL
Hilmer, Douglas
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
Kentucky Youth Advocates                               KY
KIDS COUNT in Delaware                                 DE
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
Maine Children's Alliance                              ME
Massachusetts Voter Table                              MA
MassVOTE                                              MA
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
Mercy Housing Northwest                                WA
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Population Association of America
Prison Policy Initiative
Public Justice Center
Research Advisory Services, Inc. Phoenix AZ
Research Allies for Lifelong Learning
Rhode Island KIDS COUNT RI
Right to the City Boston Boston MA
RLS Demographics, Inc.
Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy NY
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center
Southeast Michigan Census Council Southfield MI
State Voices
Sunlight Foundation
Tangible Consulting Services Minneapolis MN
The Children's Partnership
The Farmworker Association of Florida, Inc FL
The Jewish Federations of North America
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
The Minnesota Foundation MN
The National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE)
Univision Communications Inc.
Urban and Regional Information Systems Association
Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition VT
VOICES for Alabama's Children AL
Voices for Virginia's Children VA
Women Donors Network
ZERO TO THREE