

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 10, 2022

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen  
Chair  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,  
Science, and Related Agencies  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
125 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,  
Science, and Related Agencies  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
142 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Shaheen and Ranking Member Moran:

As you consider fiscal year (FY) 2023 appropriations, we write respectfully to request your support for \$2 billion in funding for the Census Bureau, which represents a \$495 million increase over the president's budget request (\$1.505 billion) and \$646 million over the agency's FY 2022 enacted level (\$1.354 million).

The Census Bureau is at an important crossroads. The agency is still resolving the outcome of the 2020 Census, while simultaneously pursuing groundbreaking technical innovations and preparing for the 2030 Census. In FY 2023, Congress has a unique opportunity to initiate multi-year funding for the Bureau, providing the agency with resources that it needs not only to sustain and strengthen its mission, but also to recover from years of postponed enhancements and pursue numerous necessary operational improvements to consolidate and integrate legacy surveys and systems into a new, more nimble data collection and dissemination model, to enhance the American Community Survey (ACS), and to pursue initiatives outlined in the administration's FY 2023 budget submission and others proposed by census stakeholders, including:

**2020 Census**—The President's Budget proposed \$160 million for 2020 Census programs (an \$85 million decrease) in FY 2023, as the Bureau finishes the last of the decennial data products and evaluations/assessments. These were mostly delayed because of the pandemic disruption of the headcount. Much of the resources necessary will be provided by carryover funding, but funding is still required to support the remaining major IT contract (the Technical Integrator) through the conclusion of all 2020 Census activities and "finalize lessons learned" on the IT systems side.

**2030 Census**—The President's Budget proposed \$252 million for the 2030 Census in FY 2023 (a \$249 million increase from only \$3 million in FY 2022). This is nearly twice the increase requested a decade ago for the 2020 Census in comparable FY 2013 dollars (\$64.8 million), as the Bureau intends to continue research and testing to design the next decennial headcount, including work to develop and maintain the completeness of the address list so that less of the country must be updated in the field. The Bureau will continue work to develop and maintain the use of administrative records as a source

of data for enumeration, and bringing efficiencies to field operations to reduce non-response follow up. Early decade investments in the decennial census will allow the Bureau to sustain critical capabilities and, as a result reduce the risk of additional funding needs in the peak years later in the decade.

**High Frequency Data Program**—The Bureau’s “Pulse Surveys” have provided timely data regarding the economic, social, and health effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on U.S. communities and businesses. These surveys have attracted support from other federal agencies that have collaborated with the Census Bureau to produce the Small Business and Household Pulse Survey. The Census Bureau requested \$14.77 million in FY 2023 to sustain and expand this innovation that provides much more timely data on current economic and social issues as our country continues to recover from the pandemic.

**The American Community Survey**—While the President’s budget requests an additional \$10 million to improve how the ACS measures the sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) population, census stakeholders and data users in the public, private, non-profit sectors believe the ACS needs an immediate infusion of substantial funding to pursue other long overdue enhancements to the survey. These enhancements include increasing the survey’s sample size, improving its non-response follow up operations, addressing steadily declining response rates, revising content, and making other methodological and operational improvements. An [independent report](#) issued in 2022 by The Census Project urges an infusion of \$100 to \$300 million to protect the ACS from further data quality deficiencies and pursue a long list of activities to ensure the survey is accurately capturing data about the nation’s increasingly complex population and households.

**The Economic Census**—The Administration proposed \$170 million for the Economic Census in FY 2023 (a \$27.1 million increase from FY 2022). The Bureau will be conducting most of the data collection activities in FY 2023, including nonresponse follow up, as well as data processing. This every-five-years survey of U.S. businesses seeks to reach about four million businesses of all sizes, “covering most industries and all geographic areas” and providing comprehensive, detailed information on the structure of the U.S. non-farm economy.

**Partnership Programs**—The Administration’s proposed \$2.7 million in FY 2023 for the Enterprise Partnership Program, which would spin off the traditionally transient decennial headcount’s partnership program into a much smaller, but permanent, ongoing, engagement with non-federal partners to assist and support other Census Bureau programs. It would also ensure that the partnership program for the 2030 Census will require less ramp-up time and cost. For FY 2023 specifically, the Census Bureau plans to collaborate with partners to promote response for the Economic Census and increase response rates for the Census of Governments. The program could also conduct ongoing outreach in support of the ACS and maintain relationships with 2020 stakeholders to further the Bureau’s goals and better understand partner needs.

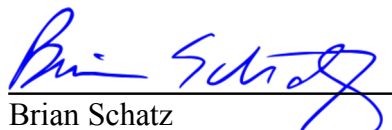
**Innovations to Existing Surveys and Programs**—The President’s FY 2023 budget proposes several initiatives that would improve existing surveys and programs important to census stakeholders, including \$4.5 million to develop and test a self-response web-based instrument for the Current Population Survey, which is the primary source of information regarding national unemployment rate and provides other data regarding employment, unemployment, and people not in the labor force. It also includes an additional \$3.7 million to support the Community Resilience Estimates program, which began during the pandemic to provide more granular population data, as well as an additional \$66.6 million to support “critical updates to data collection methods for surveys that produce vital statistical data on the U.S. population and economy.”


**Population Estimates**—The significant operational disruption in the 2020 Census heightened concerns about differential undercounts of racial and ethnic population subgroups, rural areas, and young children. The annual series of Population Estimates is a major opportunity to help mitigate the consequences of an inaccurate count, which is the basis for all subsequent annual estimates for the next decade. Census stakeholders are calling for an additional \$10 million to support expanded opportunities for cities, counties, towns, tribal governments, and other localities to help ensure the accuracy of their annual estimates. Half of the additional resources (\$5 million) could restore the Population Estimates Branch to its 2003 funding and staffing levels and ensure that new data sources are part of the bureau’s transformation. The remaining \$5 million could allow each state in the Federal-State Cooperative for Population Estimates to have a dedicated full-time staff member who could assist all localities—especially smaller ones—within each respective state to participate in an expanded improvement program, without creating an unfunded mandate on local communities who need to remedy 2020 errors. This long overdue increase in Population Estimates Program funding represents a minimal investment to ensure that trillions of taxpayer dollars over the decade are spent wisely and fairly.

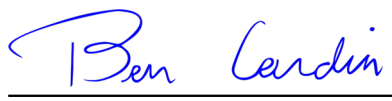
**Modernizing the Bureau’s data infrastructure**—The Census Bureau should harness currently available “Big Data” technologies and methodologies to reduce respondent burden and realign the agency’s already-existing data from multiple sources into a universal format. For example, a significant increase in funding for the Census Frames initiative will allow the Census Bureau to reduce duplication, increase ease and usability of federal statistical data, enhance the quality of Bureau products, facilitate analysis of the U.S. population and economy, and ensure that the federal government can utilize administrative data to maximum advantage before burdening survey respondents.

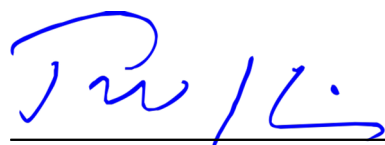
The Census Bureau faces many challenges and opportunities during this upcoming fiscal year, and Congress has the opportunity to provide robust assistance in the agency’s efforts. We thank you for your continued support of the Census Bureau.


Sincerely,

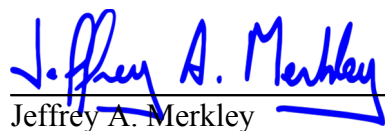
  
Brian Schatz  
United States Senator

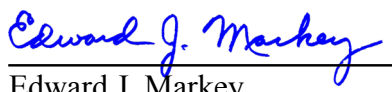
  
Tina Smith  
United States Senator


  
Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator


  
Tim Kaine  
United States Senator

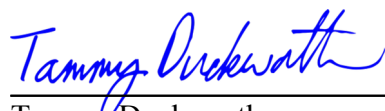
  
Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator

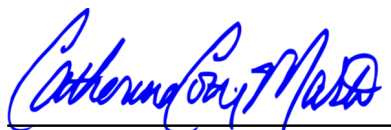
  
Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator

  
Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator

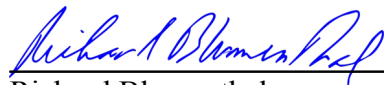
  
Jacky Rosen  
United States Senator

  
Christopher S. Murphy  
United States Senator

  
Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto  
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters  
United States Senator



Robert Menendez  
United States Senator



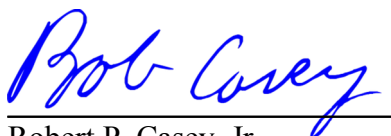
Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



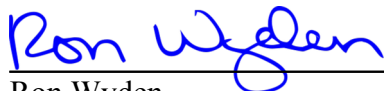
Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator



Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



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Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



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Margaret Wood Hassan  
United States Senator



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Debbie Stabenow  
United States Senator



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Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator



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Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator



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Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator