May 9, 2024

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

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

Dear Chair Shaheen and Ranking Member Moran:

As the Commerce, Justice, Science (CJS) Appropriations Subcommittee considers its fiscal year (FY) 2025 appropriations bill, we respectfully request that you prioritize funding for the U.S. Census Bureau by providing the agency with $2 billion.

The Decennial Census is a cornerstone of our constitutional system of government determining reapportionment in the U.S. House of Representatives and the Electoral College. Census data helps the private sector make sound investments by identifying underserved or emerging markets and developing business plans and loan applications. Over $1.5 trillion in Federal funding for healthcare, roads and bridges, education, first responders, rural businesses, and support for veterans is allocated annually to states and localities based on census data. Further, census data inform evaluation and research activities conducted by state and local government officials and scientists at U.S. research institutions.

Fiscal Year 2025 marks the midpoint in the ramp up to the 2030 Census. As you know, the decennial census is a massive undertaking, requiring hundreds of operations that need to be planned, tested, and made ready for the U.S. government’s largest peacetime civilian operation. Funding for the 2030 Census must begin ramping up to support critical testing and operations geared toward achieving an inclusive, accurate, and cost-effective decennial census. Funding shortfalls during the last decade forced the Bureau to scale back strategic field tests—a decision that may have contributed to the less accurate counts of racial and ethnic populations, rural areas, and young children resulting from the 2020 Census. Investing in the 2030 Census now will allow the Bureau to sustain essential capabilities and schedules and reduce the risk of requiring unplanned, additional funding in the peak planning years later in the decade.

In addition to supporting enhanced 2030 Census preparations, the Census Bureau needs robust funding to enhance and improve the over 130 ongoing survey and program operations, including the American Community Survey (ACS) which provides continuous data, used by the private,
public, non-profit, and academic sectors, about the nation’s ever changing demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. The Bureau also needs funding to modernize, consolidate, and integrate legacy survey frames; test and implement revisions to Federal race and ethnicity data collection standards; improve the Population Estimates program; pursue enhanced uses of administrative record to reduce survey respondent burden; and tackle the historic undercount of hard-to-reach populations, especially young children, across all of its surveys.

The Census Bureau faces many challenges and opportunities during this upcoming fiscal year, which with additional support from Congress would assist the agency's modernization plans to make it operationally more efficient and improve data product quality.

Once again, we encourage your subcommittee to make the Census Bureau a high priority and to recommend the agency receive $2 billion in FY25. In addition, we urge you to oppose proposals that would use the Census Bureau as a funding offset for other programs supported by the CJS bill.

Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,

Brian Schatz
United States Senator

Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator

Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator

Alex Padilla
United States Senator

Tim Kaine
United States Senator

Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator