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U.S. Census Bureau Director  
1973-76 and 1979-81

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U.S. Census Bureau Director  
2019-2021

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U.S. Census Bureau Director  
2009-2012

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U.S. Census Bureau Director  
1998

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U.S. Census Bureau Acting Director  
2012-2013

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U.S. Census Bureau Director  
1998-2001

**Dr. Marty Farnsworth Riche**  
U.S. Census Bureau Director  
1994-1998

**Mr. Robert L. Santos**  
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2022-2025

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Population Association of America and  
Association of Population Centers

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National Association of Latino Elected and  
Appointed Officials (NALEO) Education Fund

September 8, 2025

The Honorable Hal Rogers  
Chairman  
Commerce, Justice, Science Subcommittee  
House Appropriations Committee  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Grace Meng  
Ranking Member  
Commerce, Justice, Science Subcommittee  
House Appropriations Committee  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Meng,

On behalf of [The Census Project](https://www.TheCensusProject.org), a broad-based coalition of census stakeholders and data users in the private, public, non-profit, and academic sectors committed to supporting the U.S. Census Bureau's mission to produce full, fair, complete, and accurate data, we are writing to express our interests and concerns regarding the subcommittee's proposed Fiscal Year 2026 Commerce, Justice, Science (CJS) Appropriations bill. While we are pleased the bill proposes funding the Census Bureau at the level recommended by the Administration, \$1.6765 billion, we are deeply concerned about a menacing policy provision (Sec.605 ) included in the bill.

The Subcommittee's bill includes policy provisions that would not only exclude individuals who are in the United States unlawfully from the apportionment base, but also adversely affect the quality and availability of census survey data—especially for small populations and areas. Focusing on the latter, our coalition is concerned about the potential implications of Section 605. Section 605 states that “None of the funds in this Act may be used to enforce involuntary compliance, or to inquire more than twice for voluntary compliance with any survey conducted by the Bureau of the Census.” If adopted, this language would prohibit enforcement of the mandatory response requirement on the decennial headcount and the American Community Survey (ACS), while also restricting the Bureau's ability to conduct non-response follow-up operations across all of its surveys. This provision would have a devastating impact on the decennial census, which historically has had to send more than two invitations to self-respond in order to count more than half of U.S. households. According to data from the U.S. Census Bureau's Census 2020 Non-Response Follow Up operations, the two-contact strategy would have meant that 17 million U.S. households, or 38.5% of the non-responding households, would have gone uncounted in the 2020 Census. The provision would likewise undermine coverage in the ACS and the Current Population Survey, which require more than 3 and approximately 2.5 follow-up contacts, respectively. Major business, economic, and demographic surveys that have multiple follow-up contact strategies would likewise be adversely impacted. Given the havoc this provision would have on all of the Bureau's surveys, we urge removal of this provision as the bill proceeds through the legislative process.

With respect to funding, we urge the Committee to oppose any efforts to reduce the Census Bureau's funding level in the FY 2026 CJS appropriations bill. At a minimum,

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the Census Bureau needs the Administration's requested funds to not only sustain its current operations, but also to prepare for the 2030 Census. FY 2026 is a crucial year in the ramp up to the 2030 Census in which preparations (and costs) begin to exponentially increase. In FY 2026, the Census Bureau will conduct the 2026 Census Test in six geographically- and demographically-diverse sites nationwide. The test is a critically important component of the decennial census planning cycle in which the Bureau evaluates new enumeration strategies and data collection technologies in the field. As we learned in the run up to the 2020 Census, shortchanging funding for testing at this point in the planning process introduces greater risk to a successful outcome. Adequate support for decennial census preparations now will reduce the risk of requiring unplanned, additional funding in the peak years at the end of the decade and improve the agency's ability to conduct an inclusive, accurate count in 2030.

Thank you for considering our views as you negotiate a final FY 2026 CJS appropriations bill. We look forward to working with you to produce a final FY 2026 CJS bill that provides the U.S. Census Bureau with robust funding and empowers the agency to fulfill its mission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Mary Jo H. Mitchell".

Mary Jo H. Mitchell  
Census Project Co-Director

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Howard Fienberg".

Howard Fienberg  
Census Project Co-Director