November xx, 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 to complete the Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 Commerce, Justice, Science (CJS) appropriations bill, we the undersigned organizations, as members and affiliates of The Census Project[1], are writing to urge the highest possible level of funding for the U.S. Census Bureau (no less than $1.94 billion recommended by the Senate Appropriations Committee). In addition, as part of the final FY 27 CJS measure, we encourage you to address a recently proposed rule that would dramatically upend the conduct of the 2030 Census and future decennial censuses.

Fiscal Year 2027 Funding

As you know, in its FY 2027 proposed budget, the Administration requested that the Census Bureau receive $2.01 billion, which is $536.15 million more than the agency's FY 2026 enacted funding level. While this amount is below The Census Project's funding recommendation of $2.1 billion, it is substantially higher than the amount, $1.49 billion, that the House Appropriations Committee recommended. The House mark, which is $521 million below the Administration's request, would essentially hold the Census Bureau at its FY 2026 level. The Senate Appropriations Committee, on the other hand, has recommended the Bureau receive $1.94 billion in FY 2027, which is $454.1million above the agency's FY 2026 funding level.

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. Among its many FY 2027 obligations, the Bureau must deliver proposed topics to be covered in the 2030 Census and American Community Survey (ACS) by April 1; evaluate findings from the 2026 Census Test; and launch the Local Update of Census

[1] 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).

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.

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 each year over the next decade. 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.

To reverse the current 2030 Census spending trajectory as well as to ensure the Census Bureau has sufficient funding to support its other critical surveys and programs, including the ACS, Population Estimates Program, Economic Census, and Survey of Income and Program Participation, **we urge you to support no less than the FY 2027 funding level recommended by the Senate Appropriations Committee, $1.94 billion.**

Proposed Decennial Census Rule

On September 10, the Census Bureau released a proposed rule, **Census Bureau Decennial Census of the Population of Americans; Proposed Residence Criteria and Proposed Regulations for Demographic Questions**, that would dramatically alter the design and conduct of the 2030 Census. This sweeping proposal recommends numerous consequential changes, including, but not limited to:

- Counting only U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents (green card holders) for apportionment purposes, and excluding many noncitizens, including undocumented immigrants, temporary visa holders, and international students, who are currently counted in the census population base;
- Removing race and ethnicity questions from the decennial census questionnaire and prohibiting the addition of future sexual orientation questions;
- Requiring the use of tax records to verify an individual's residence;
- Replacing April 1 Census Day with a new enumeration period (January 3-April 1); and

- Codifying a Department of Commerce Disclosure Avoidance Order restricting the Bureau's ability to use certain methods for protecting sensitive data, which census stakeholders and experts have said threatens the quality and reliability of future census data products.

Given the magnitude of these changes, almost 150,000 public comments were submitted by a diverse array of individuals representing the interests and views of state and local government, tribal nations, economic development and business, housing, education, health care, civil rights, human services, and scientific research. In addition, 153 members of the U.S. House of Representatives signed a letter opposing the rule as did a bipartisan group of 24 U.S. Senators. Six former directors of the U.S. Census Bureau also submitted comments, expressing concern that the proposed changes were not tested, evaluated, or published in accordance with the agency's standard operational procedures.

The abbreviated public comment period closed on November 2. An independent analysis found that 88 percent of the comments opposed the rule. Many of the comments addressed the implications of removing the race and ethnicity questions, which have been asked in some form on every decennial census since 1790. Others focused on the potential consequences of moving away from Census Day, which has been in effect since 1930, to an enumeration period, will be problematic and confusing for individuals, including snowbirds, seasonal workers, college students, and foster children, who may live in multiple places during the enumeration period. The use of tax records to verify residence also raised numerous concerns given tax records do not always align with an individual's residence and may misrepresent, for example, children who are not represented in tax records as well as deployed military personnel.

Given the rule was developed without the benefit of extensive testing and public input, threatens the integrity of the 2030 Census and its data, and has generated numerous concerns and questions from thousands of census stakeholders, policymakers, and data users nationwide, we **urge the inclusion of language in the FY 2027 CJS measure blocking or, at a minimum, delaying implementation of the final rule.** If a long-term continuing resolution is necessary before the FY 2027 CJS bill is enacted, we hope it will include similar language precluding the Administration from moving forward with this flawed rule.

Thank you for considering our views as you complete the Fiscal Year 2027 CJS appropriations bill.

cc The Honorable Susan Collins
The Honorable Patty Murray
The Honorable Tom Cole
The Honorable Rosa DeLauro