

Testimony on behalf of the
Population Association of America/Association of Population Centers
Regarding the Fiscal Year 2015 Appropriation for the
**National Institutes of Health, National Center for Health Statistics,
and Bureau of Labor Statistics**
Submitted to the
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services and Education
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Introduction

Thank you, Mr. Chairman Kingston, Ranking Member DeLauro, and other distinguished members of the Subcommittee, for this opportunity to express support for the National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), and Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). These agencies are important to the members of the Population Association of America (PAA) and Association of Population Centers (APC) because they provide direct and indirect support to population scientists and the field of population, or demographic, research overall. In FY 2015, we urge the Subcommittee to adopt the following funding recommendations: NIH, \$32 billion, consistent with the level recommended by the Ad Hoc Group for Medical Research; NCHS, \$182 million, consistent with the Administration's request; and BLS, \$610 million, consistent with the Administration's request, at a minimum.

The PAA and APC are two affiliated organizations that together represent almost 4,000 social and behavioral scientists and almost 40 population research centers nationwide that conduct research on the implications of population change. Our members, which include demographers, economists, sociologists, and statisticians, conduct scientific research, analyze changing demographic and socio-economic trends, develop policy recommendations, and train undergraduate and graduate students. Their research expertise covers a wide range of issues,

including adolescent health and development, aging, health disparities, immigration and migration, marriage and divorce, education, social networks, housing, retirement, and labor.

National Institutes of Health

Demography is the study of populations and how or why they change. A key component of the NIH mission is to support biomedical, social, and behavioral research that will improve the health of our population. The health of our population is fundamentally intertwined with the demography of our population. Recognizing the connection between health and demography, NIH supports extramural population research programs primarily through the National Institute on Aging (NIA) and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD).

National Institute on Aging

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the number of people age 65 or older will more than double between 2010 and 2050 to 88.5 million or 20 percent of the population; and those 85 and older will increase from about 14 percent of the older population to 21 percent in 2050. To assess the implications of our rapidly aging population, policymakers need objective, reliable data about the antecedents and impact of changing social, demographic, economic, health and well-being characteristics of the older population. The NIA Division of Behavioral and Social Research (BSR) is the primary source of federal support for basic research on these topics.

In addition to supporting an impressive research portfolio that includes the prestigious Centers on the Demography and Economics of Aging, the NIA BSR Division also supports several large surveys that produce accessible data. These surveys include the National Health and Aging Trends Study (NHATS), which has enrolled 8,000 Medicare beneficiaries with the goal of studying late-life disability trends and dynamics. The study also includes a supplement to examine informal caregivers and their impact on the utilization of long-term care by people with

chronic disabilities. Another NIA survey, the Health and Retirement Study (HRS), provides unique information about economic transitions in work, income, and wealth, allowing scientists to study how the domains of family, economic resources, and health interact. The HRS has collected data every two years since 1992, including most recently, biomarkers, from a representative sample of more than 26,000 Americans over the age of 50. These data are accessible to researchers worldwide and have informed numerous scientific findings. For example, in 2013, researchers using the HRS published a study in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, concluding that the cost of providing dementia care is comparable to, if not greater than, those for heart disease and cancer.

Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development

Since 1968, NICHD has supported research on population processes and change. This research is housed in the Institute's Population Dynamics Branch, which supports research and training in demography, reproductive health, and population health and funds major national studies that track the health and well-being of children and their families from childhood through adulthood. These studies include Fragile Families and Child Well-Being, the first scientific study to track the health and development of children born to unmarried parents, and the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health), tracing the effects of childhood and adolescent exposures on later health.

One of the most important population research programs that the NICHD supports is the Population Dynamics Centers Research Infrastructure Program. This program promotes innovation, supports interdisciplinary research, translates scientific findings into practice, and develops the next generation of population scientists. In addition, the centers provide incentives to reduce the costs and increase the efficiency of research by streamlining and consolidating

research infrastructure. The population research centers generate and facilitate significant scientific research findings as well. For example, in March 2014, researchers at Johns Hopkins University published findings in *JAMA*, concluding that opening or expanding casinos on California tribal lands not only reduces poverty, but also the obesity rate of children by almost 3 percent.

National Center for Health Statistics

Located within the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) is the nation's principal statistical agency that provides data on the health of the U.S. population and supports essential data collection activities. Most notably, NCHS funds and manages the National Vital Statistics System (NVSS), which contracts with the states to collect birth and death certificate information. NCHS also funds a number of complex large surveys to help policy makers, public health officials, and researchers understand the population's health and influences on health. These surveys include the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, National Health Interview Survey (NHIS), and National Survey of Family Growth. The wealth of data NCHS collects makes the agency an invaluable resource for population scientists. The Subcommittee's support of NCHS in recent years has enabled it to make significant progress toward modernizing the NVSS, moving many states from paper-based to electronic filing of birth and death statistics and expediting the release of these data to the user community. Yet, much work is still needed to fully modernize the NVSS and to support necessary expansions to the agency's core surveys so that these data can effectively assess Americans' health.

Bureau of Labor Statistics

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) produces essential economic information for public and private decision making. Its data are used extensively by population scientists who study and

evaluate labor and related economic policies and programs. The agency also supports the National Longitudinal Studies program and the American Time Use Survey, which are invaluable datasets that the population sciences use to understand how complex factors, such as changes in work status, income, and education, interact to affect health and achievement outcomes in children and adults.

Since FY 2010, the BLS budget has decreased by 10 percent, taking inflation into account. Its bleak fiscal outlook has forced the agency to cut or curtail surveys and put some its programs, such as the export pricing program, in serious jeopardy of complete elimination. Given the importance and unique nature of BLS data, we urge the Subcommittee to support the Administration's request, \$610 million, at a minimum, but to consider increasing its funding to \$631 million. This additional funding is necessary to restore the agency's purchasing power back to FY 2010 levels and specifically to restore cuts made to the Current Employment Survey and the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages and to expand the Current Population Survey.

Conclusion

Thank you for considering the importance of these agencies under your jurisdiction that benefit the population sciences. We urge you to give them the highest funding priority as the FY 2015 appropriations process proceeds.