June 27, 2013

The Honorable Tom Carper
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security &
Governmental Affairs
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Coburn
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security &
Governmental Affairs
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Carper and Coburn:

We are writing on behalf of the membership of the Population Association of America (PAA) and the Association of Population Centers (APC) to express our strong support for the nomination of Mr. John Thompson to be the next Director of the United States Census Bureau.

Together, our organizations comprise over 3,000 social and behavioral scientists, including demographers, economists, sociologists, and statisticians who conduct research on the implications of population change, and over 40 population research centers nationwide. While our members have diverse research interests and expertise, ranging from adolescent health to population aging, they share a common need for access to accurate, timely data about the nation’s changing socio-economic and demographic characteristics. The U.S. Census Bureau provides these invaluable data, which are used not only to conduct policy-relevant, scientific, and business research, but also to train the next generation of population scientists. Thus, we have a vested interest in who is chosen to lead the Census Bureau. We believe Mr. Thompson is the ideal candidate.

With 27 years of experience at the Census Bureau, Mr. Thompson understands the complexity of the agency’s operations. During his tenure at the Census Bureau, he held high-level positions, including managing Census 2000—a position that makes him uniquely qualified to run Census 2020 and assume responsibility for overseeing its mid-decade preparations. After leaving the Bureau to become the President and CEO of the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago, Mr. Thompson remained a national leader in the conduct and design of large-scale surveys and in the development of new survey methodologies. While at NORC, Mr. Thompson also acquired significant experience managing a large organization—an essential requirement that the next director of the U.S. Census Bureau must possess in accordance with the recently enacted Presidential Appointment Efficiency and Streamlining Act.

We are confident that Mr. Thompson possesses the right technical and administrative skills to lead the Census Bureau. He is well positioned to keep plans on track to implement innovative technologies, such as Internet response options on the American Community Survey and Census 2020, and to institute appropriate, well-informed managerial policies and practices. In light of Mr. Thompson’s qualifications, we urge the committee to approve his nomination swiftly and to seek Senate confirmation as soon as possible.

Thank you for your consideration of our views. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can provide the committee with any additional information.

Respectfully,

Christine A. Bachrach, Ph.D.
Pamela J. Smock, Ph.D.