

Fiscal Year 2021 Testimony on behalf of the
Population Association of America/Association of Population Centers

Submitted to House Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations

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Population Association of America/Association of Population Centers

Thank you, Chairman DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole for this opportunity to express support for the National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), Institute of Education Sciences (IES), 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 2021, we urge the Subcommittee to adopt the following funding recommendations: \$44.7 billion, NIH; \$189 million, NCHS; \$670 million, IES; and \$658.3 million, BLS.

National Institutes of Health

Demography is the study of populations and how or why they change. The health of our population is fundamentally intertwined with the demography of our population. Recognizing the connection between health and demography, NIH supports population research programs primarily through the National Institute on Aging (NIA) and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD). As members of the Ad Hoc Group for Medical Research, PAA and APC recommend an appropriation of at least \$44.7 billion for the NIH, a \$3

billion increase over the NIH's program level funding in FY 2020. We urge that NIA and NICHD, as components of the NIH, receive commensurate funding increases in FY 2021.

National Institute on Aging

The NIA Division of Behavioral and Social Research (BSR) is the primary source of federal support for basic population aging research. In January 2020, the NIA National Advisory Council on Aging (NACA) released a comprehensive review of the BSR Division. The report reinforced the value of the Institute's investment in an array of population aging research activities, including large-scale, longitudinal studies, such as the Health and Retirement Study, and center programs, such as the Centers on the Demography and Economics of Aging, which are conducting research on the demographic, economic, social, and health consequences of U.S. and global aging at 11 universities nationwide. With additional funding in FY 2021, the BSR Division could continue to support these activities as well as pursue recommendations that the NACA review identified, including expanding research opportunities to advance our understanding of the poor overall health of older people in America and the growing disparities in some parts of the country.

Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute on Child Health and Human Development

Since the Institute's inception in 1962, NICHD has had a clear mandate to support a robust research portfolio focusing on maternal and child health, the social determinants of health, and human development across the lifespan. The NICHD Population Dynamics Branch meets this mandate by supporting innovative and influential population science initiatives, including: 1) large-scale longitudinal surveys, with population representative samples, such as the National

Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health and Fragile Families and Child Well Being Study; 2) a nationwide network of population science research and training centers; and, 3) numerous scientific research initiatives that have advanced our understanding of specific diseases and conditions, including obesity, autism, and maternal mortality, and, further, how socioeconomic and biological factors jointly determine human health. With additional support in FY 2021, the Institute could continue supporting its large-scale data collection activities and its Population Dynamics Centers Research Infrastructure Program. Finally, with additional support to NIH overall, NICHD could help achieve the goals of the agency's proposed research initiative to reduce maternal mortality.

National Center for Health Statistics

NCHS is the nation's principal health statistics agency, providing data on the health of the U.S. population. Population scientists rely on large NCHS-supported health surveys, especially the National Health Interview Survey and National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, to study demographic, socioeconomic, and behavioral differences in health and mortality outcomes. They also rely on the vital statistics data that NCHS releases to track trends in fertility, mortality, and disability. NCHS health data are an essential part of the nation's statistical and public health infrastructure. In order to support NCHS's continued work to monitor the health of the American people and to allow the agency to make much-needed investments in the next generation of its surveys and products, PAA, as a member of the Friends of NCHS, recommends NCHS receive at \$189 million in FY 2021. Our recommendation reflects an increase to NCHS's base budget of \$14.6 million from its FY 2020 appropriation, as well as the formalization of an ongoing \$14 million transfer from Surveillance, Epidemiology, and Informatics as proposed in the President's

FY 2021 Budget Request. We urge the Subcommittee to reject the Administration's proposed \$5.4 million cut to the agency, which would have a devastating impact on NCHS's ability to continue to provide timely, unbiased, and accurate data on Americans' health and could result in the elimination of one of its primary health surveys.

Bureau of Labor Statistics

Population scientists who study and evaluate labor and related economic policies use BLS data extensively. The field also relies on unique BLS-supported surveys, such as the American Time Use Survey and National Longitudinal Surveys, to understand how work, unemployment, and retirement influence health and well-being outcomes across the lifespan. As members of the Friends of Labor Statistics, PAA and APC are very grateful for \$40 million programmatic increase that BLS received in FY 2020. It was the first meaningful increase that the agency had received since 2009. We are also pleased that BLS received \$10 million in FY 2020 to plan for a new youth cohort for the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY). As the Subcommittee knows, the current NLSY 1979 and 1997 cohorts cannot provide adequate information about teens and young adults entering the labor market. PAA and APC hope that this planning process will provoke a new, necessary NLSY cohort in FY 2021. We urge the Subcommittee to continue sustained support for the agency in FY 2021 by supporting the Administration's request, \$658.3 million, in FY 2021.

Institute of Education Sciences (IES)

PAA relies on the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), particularly the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) within IES, for objective information on the condition of education

in the United States, including topics ranging from K-12 to post-secondary education, teacher development, and school violence. PAA joins other social science organizations in expressing concerns about inadequate staffing at NCES and its adverse effect on the agency's ability to manage its broad array of surveys and assure data quality and program rigor. We urge the Subcommittee to exert careful oversight of this situation and consider whether legislative language could be adopted in the FY 2021 bill to address it. Further, as members of the Friends of IES, we ask that agency receive \$670 million in FY 2021.

Thank you for considering our support for these agencies as the Subcommittee drafts the FY 2021 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations bill.