

**Testimony on behalf of the
Population Association of America/Association of Population Centers
Regarding the Fiscal Year 2018 Appropriations for
the Census Bureau
and the National Science Foundation**

Submitted to the

Senate Committee on Appropriations

Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies

The Honorable Richard Shelby, Chairman and

The Honorable Jean Shaheen, Ranking Member

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Thank you, Chairman Shelby, Ranking Member Shaheen, and other distinguished members of the Subcommittee, for this opportunity to express support for the Census Bureau and the National Science Foundation (NSF). These agencies are important to 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 2018, we urge the Subcommittee to provide the Census Bureau with robust, sufficient funding to ensure the agency’s ability to conduct U.S. Census Bureau’s 2018 End-To- End field test of new, innovative and cost-saving strategies for the 2020 Census, American Community Survey (ACS), Economic Census, and the other important programs and surveys that the Bureau supports. In addition, PAA and APC support \$8 Billion for the National Science Foundation (NSF), consistent with the recommendation of the Coalition for National Science Funding;

The PAA and APC are two affiliated organizations that together represent over 3,000 social and behavioral scientists and almost 40 federally funded population research centers nationwide that conduct research on the numerous and varied 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. Population scientists compete for funding from the NSF and rely on data produced by the nation’s statistical agencies, including the Census Bureau, to conduct research and research training activities.

The Census Bureau

The Census Bureau is the premier source of data regarding U.S. demographic, socio-economic, and housing characteristics. While PAA/APC members have diverse research expertise, they share a common need for access to accurate, timely data about the nation’s changing socio-economic and demographic characteristics that only the U.S. Census Bureau can provide through its conduct of the decennial census, American Community Survey (ACS), and a variety of other surveys and programs.

FY2018 is a pivotal year in the 2020 Census planning cycle. Next year, the Census Bureau must conduct an end-to-end readiness test in three geographic areas (urban, suburban, and rural) of the country. The test will be the only opportunity to evaluate all of the technical innovations that the Bureau has developed since 2010 in true, census-like environments.

In its initial FY 2018 budget, the Trump Administration requested a \$30 million increase over the agency's FY 2017 enacted funding level. This proposed increase is woefully inadequate to support the Bureau's scheduled decennial preparations in FY 2018. Between years 7 and 8 leading up to the decennial, Administrations typically request significant funding increases to account for the census ramp-up activities that must occur prior to the decennial. For example, in the last decade, between FY 2007 and 2008, the Bush Administration requested a 25 percent increase in funding for the Bureau. We urge the subcommittee to provide the Census Bureau with sufficient funding to keep Census 2020 preparations on track. The funding should also enable the Census Bureau to resume tests and activities that were postponed or canceled in FY 2017 due to funding delays. These activities include testing innovative enumeration strategies, opening six Regional Census Centers, and proceeding with the advertising campaign and Partnership Program.

These activities are essential to ensuring a more cost effective, accurate, and inclusive census. Without sufficient resources to pursue these innovations, the bureau is likely to rely on traditional and far more costly census methods—an outcome that would jeopardize the accuracy of the 2020 Census and increase its costs above the Census 2010 price tag.

With respect to the ACS, the PAA and APC urge the Committee to oppose any attempts that may occur during consideration of the FY 2018 Commerce, Justice, Science (CJS) appropriations bill to change the mandatory response status of the ACS. In 2003, the Census Bureau conducted a test on a voluntary ACS. They found that survey costs increased by approximately \$60 million (\$90 in current dollars) and response rates decreased by an estimated 20 percent. Canada's recent experience of moving from a mandatory to voluntary National Household Survey (NHS), the Canadian equivalent of the ACS, is a cautionary example. The overall response rate dropped from 94 percent to under 69 percent, increasing costs by \$22 million as Statistics Canada *increased* the sample size to make up for lower response. The U.S. should heed Canada's example and maintain the integrity of the mandatory ACS. We also urge the subcommittee to protect the integrity of the survey's funding and oppose any efforts, if they arise, to cut the ACS in order to boost funding for other census programs or other accounts in the CJS bill.

National Science Foundation (NSF)

The mission of NSF is to promote the progress of science; to advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare; and to secure the national defense. Understanding the implications of complex population dynamics is vital to the agency's mission. The Directorate of Social, Behavioral and Economic (SBE) Sciences is the primary source of support for the population sciences within the NSF. The Directorate funds critical large-scale longitudinal surveys, such as the *Panel Study of Income Dynamics*, that inform pressing policy decisions and enable policy makers to make effective decisions. Other projects, such as the *Social Observatory Coordinating Network*, integrate social science and health research, linking community and national data to improve population health. The Network also has examined and recently released

recommendations on how to develop a 21st Century data infrastructure for social science that would substantially improve data integration among various datasets and surveys, which would in turn enhance the quality and precision of research findings.

NSF is the funding source for over 20 percent of all federally supported basic research conducted by America's colleges and universities, including basic behavioral and social research. Moreover, the SBE Directorate funds more than half of the university-based social and behavioral sciences research in the nation.

PAA and APC, as members of the Coalition for National Science Funding, request that the committee provide NSF with \$8 billion. Since 2010, the agency has lost ground in real dollars, notwithstanding the modest increase appropriated in the FY 2016 omnibus bill. The funding level recommended for FY 2018 will enable the NSF SBE Directorate to continue its support of social science surveys and a robust portfolio of population research projects. The NSF also continues to focus on interdisciplinary research initiatives, recognizing that social and behavioral factors are intrinsic to many critical areas of research—for example the ongoing *Understanding the Brain* initiative. Funding at this level will allow NSF to continue funding the most promising grant applications that promote transformational and multidisciplinary research. Steady and sustainable real growth will enhance the nation's capability to make new discoveries, leading to new innovations.

Thank you for considering our requests and for supporting federal programs that benefit the population sciences.