

**Testimony on behalf of the
Population Association of America/ Association of Population Centers
Regarding the Fiscal Year 2022 Appropriations for the Census Bureau
and National Science Foundation**

Submitted to the
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
The Honorable Jean Shaheen, Chair and
The Honorable Jerry Moran, Ranking Member
Submitted by: Mary Jo Hoeksema, Director, Government and Public Affairs
Population Association of America/Association of Population Centers

Thank you, Chair Shaheen and Ranking Member Moran, 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) (www.populationassociation.org) 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 2022, we urge the Subcommittee to provide the Census Bureau with \$2 billion, which is approximately \$600 million above the Administration's request. In addition, PAA and APC support \$10 billion for the National Science Foundation (NSF), consistent with the recommendation of the Coalition for National Science Funding, which largely reflects the Administration's FY 2022 request.

The PAA and APC are two affiliated organizations that together represent over 3,000 social and behavioral scientists and the nearly 40 population research centers that receive federal funding and conduct research on the implications of population change. Its members, which include demographers, economists, sociologists, and statisticians, conduct scientific and applied research, analyze changing demographic and socio-economic trends, develop policy and planning 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.

PAA and APC understand that the Census Bureau's funding level declines dramatically in the initial years of the decennial planning cycle, and the Administration's request reflects, appropriately, this anticipated decrease in funding. Nonetheless, PAA and APC urge the

subcommittee to support increased funding for the Census Bureau in FY 2022 above the Administration's request. In FY 2022, Congress has a unique opportunity to initiate multi-year funding for the Bureau, providing the agency with resources that it needs to not only sustain and strengthen its mission, but also to recover from years of postponed enhancements and pursue numerous necessary operational improvements. The ambitious FY 2022 funding recommendation (\$2 billion) that census stakeholders are supporting would enable the Bureau to pursue, among other things, the following initiatives:

Modernizing the Bureau's data infrastructure--The Census Bureau needs to harness currently available Big Data technology and methodology to reduce respondent burden and realign the Bureau's already-existing data from multiple sources into universal "frames." A significant increase in funding for the Census Frames initiative, which was only funded at about \$12.7 million in FY 2021, will allow the Census Bureau to reduce duplication, increase ease and usability of federal statistical data, enhance the quality of Bureau products, facilitate analysis of the U.S. population and economy, and ensure that the federal government can utilize administrative data, responsibly and appropriately, to maximum advantage before burdening survey respondents.

Enhancing the American Community Survey (ACS)—ACS data are an invaluable resource that data users, including population scientists, rely on throughout the decade to make key investment and policy decisions as well as to conduct applied and scientific research and evaluate programs. The Bureau also needs to continue to use the ACS "as a testbed for innovative survey and data processing techniques," as Congress directed in FY 2021. Funding for the ACS has remained relatively stagnant in recent years, including a little over \$226 million in FY 2021. The Bureau needs additional funding (no less than \$45 million to increase the sample size by at least 1 million households) to properly plan and execute an expansion of the ACS, beginning in FY 2022.

Stabilizing and increasing funding for Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP)--After multiple COVID-19 relief bills, policymakers and scientists need to understand how the individual provisions in these supplemental appropriations measures assisted (or failed to assist) families and communities. The Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) is designed to achieve that goal, yet its funding has fluctuated routinely. Stabilizing and increasing support for SIPP, to no less than \$48 million in FY 2022, will help Congress make evidence-based policy decisions on the effectiveness of government assistance programs. Additional funding for SIPP could be reinvested to address long term erosion of the survey's funding and response rates, putting that money toward increased non-response follow up.

Extending Pulse Surveys--The Bureau's "Pulse Surveys" have provided timely data regarding the economic, social, and health effects of COVID-19 on U.S. communities and businesses. The surveys have attracted support from other federal agencies that have requested to add questions and collaborated with the Census Bureau to produce the surveys. The Census Bureau needs no less than \$6 million in FY 2022 to sustain and expand this innovation that provides much more timely data on current economic and social issues. Additional funding could be used to further expand the success of this novel program.

Completing the 2020 Census—Additional funding is necessary to complete delayed final assessments and evaluations of the 2020 Census and to release all remaining data products.

Initiating the 2030 Census—PAA and APC support the Census Bureau’s proposal to accelerate planning for the 2030 Census by initiating a research and testing program to pursue innovations, early in the decennial planning cycle, including improvements to the address list, evaluations to assess the appropriateness of using administrative records in the enumeration process, and strategies for making field operations more efficient.

In sum, PAA and APC join other census stakeholders in urging the Subcommittee to provide the Census Bureau with \$2 billion in FY 2022 to complete all 2020 Census operations and data delivery objectives; enhance the ACS, including plans to increase the survey’s sample size; initiate planning for the 2030 Census; improve the SIPP; extend and expand the Pulse Surveys and improve the quality and granularity of all census data sets. Further, PAA and APC urge the subcommittee to exercise its oversight authority and ask questions about the agency’s proposed budget restructuring proposal, especially as it affects the status and integrity of the ACS.

National Science Foundation (NSF)

For over 75 years the mission of NSF has been 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 provide the empirical evidence to help policy makers to formulate effective decisions. It also has participated in cross-cutting, interdisciplinary initiatives of interest to population scientists, such as the *Coastlines and People* program, which supports research on the implications of climate change on populations, and *Mid-scale Infrastructure*—two areas of emphasis among the agency’s research priorities.

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 approximately 67 percent of basic, university-based social and behavioral sciences research in the nation.

PAA and APC, as members of the Coalition for National Science Funding (CNSF), applaud the Administration’s proposed NSF FY 2022 budget request, \$10.2 billion, which represents a nearly 20 percent increase in funding over the FY 2021 enacted level. Moreover, the budget request envisions an allocation for SBE that would grow by approximately 13 percent, reflecting, we believe, a recognition that not only has SBE’s funding stagnated vis-à-vis other directorates, but more importantly that SBE related research offers significant contributions to scientific progress. We continue to support the Committee’s longstanding practice of not stipulating specific funding levels for individual NSF directorates; however, it is helpful to understand the Administration’s views on research priorities, and in this instance we concur.

We are also aware of the growing consensus within Congress and the Administration around the concept of establishing a new directorate within NSF that would support translational research, emerging technologies and public-private partnerships. We hope that the Committee will ensure that a new directorate will be funded through an expansion of NSF's footprint and budget—and not through siphoning resources from other research directorates. We note that the budget request includes a reprogramming of funds from existing NSF initiatives that would be transferred to the new directorate, but also requests new spending for the majority of the new directorate's budget.

We urge Congress to accelerate the growth of NSF's budget by providing NSF with at least \$10 billion in FY 2022. The funding level 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 science contributes to many critical areas of research. For example, the *Mid-scale Infrastructure* program is currently funding broad-scale, sensor-based data collection projects that represent collaborations among population scientists and computer scientists. Increased funding in FY 2022 will allow NSF to continue funding the most promising grant applications and reduce the number of high caliber proposals that are rejected solely for lack of sufficient funds.

Thank you for considering our requests and for supporting federal programs that benefit the population sciences under the subcommittee's jurisdiction.