

**Testimony on behalf of the
Population Association of America/ Association of Population Centers
Regarding the Fiscal Year 2021 Appropriations for the Census Bureau
and National Science Foundation**

Submitted to the
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
The Honorable Jose Serrano, Chairman and
The Robert Aderholt, Ranking Member
Submitted by: Mary Jo Hoeksema, Director, Government and Public Affairs
Population Association of America/Association of Population Centers

Thank you, Chairman Serrano, Ranking Member Aderholt, 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 2021, we urge the Subcommittee to provide the Census Bureau with \$1.681 billion, which is approximately \$9 million above the Administration's request. In addition, PAA and APC support \$9 billion for the National Science Foundation (NSF), consistent with the recommendation of the Coalition for National Science Funding, which is \$1.26 billion above the Administration's FY 2021 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. Our 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.

Currently, Census 2020 is underway with millions of Americans receiving their census response forms in mid-March. PAA and APC are pleased that Congress provided the Census Bureau with sufficient funding in FY 2020 to conduct the 2020 Census. We are concerned that language in

the Bureau's [FY 2021 congressional budget justification](#) suggests that the Bureau may be shortchanging the decennial headcount in order to maintain public commitments to control overall census spending and to carry over more than \$1 billion into FY 2021. PAA and APC urge the Subcommittee to conduct strong oversight of the Census Bureau's spending on the 2020 Census and to encourage the agency to spend the funds that Congress provided, including contingency funds if necessary, to ensure the conduct of an inclusive and accurate decennial census.

PAA and APC understand that the Census Bureau's funding level declines dramatically in the first year 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 provide the Census Bureau with an increase of \$9 million over the Administration's FY 2021 request. Such an increase should be directed to restore the Administration's proposed cuts to the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP). SIPP is an important resource that population scientists use to understand how income and income transfer programs affect the well-being of individuals and households. SIPP is used for measuring many small but consequential events, such as determining the impact of marital breakup on poverty or how many workers turn to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) after exhausting unemployment compensation. Such determinations require SIPP's current full sample size. The Administration's proposed would result in a 40 percent cut in the survey's sample size, rendering it unable to support reliable estimates for small population groups or selected states.

PAA and APC join other census stakeholders in urging the Subcommittee to provide the Census Bureau with \$1.681 billion in FY 2021 to help ensure a successful conclusion of the 2020 Census, invest in its other important surveys and programs, and to restore the Administration's proposed cuts to the SIPP.

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. It also has participated in cross-cutting, interdisciplinary initiatives of interest to population scientists, including the *Harnessing the Data Revolution* and *Mid-scale Infrastructure*—two of the agency's Ten Big Ideas.

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), rejects the Administration's proposed NSF FY 2021 budget request, \$7.74 billion, which represents a 6.5

percent decrease in funding over the FY 2020 enacted level—and is also more than \$409 million below the FY 2019 enacted level. As it stands, the funding rate percentage of new projects sponsored by NSF is predicted to fall from 27% in FY2019 to a projected 23% in FY 2020.

Instead, we urge Congress to accelerate the growth of NSF’s budget by providing NSF with \$9 billion in FY 2020. The funding level, which represents an 8.7% increase over the FY 2020 enacted 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 has recently funded broad-scale, sensor-based data collection projects that represent collaborations among population scientists and computer scientists. Increased funding in FY 2021 will allow NSF to continue funding the most promising grant applications that promote transformational and multidisciplinary research and to support other new promising research as part of the *Ten Big Ideas* initiative. 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.