

**Testimony on behalf of the
Population Association of America/ Association of Population Centers
Regarding the Fiscal Year 2024 Appropriations for the Census Bureau
National Science Foundation and Bureau of Justice Statistics**

Submitted to the
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
The Honorable Hal Rogers, Chair and
The Honorable Matt Cartwright, Ranking Member
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Population Association of America/Association of Population Centers

Thank you, Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Cartwright and other distinguished members of the Subcommittee, for this opportunity to express support for the Census Bureau, National Science Foundation (NSF), National Institute of Justice (NIJ), and Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS). 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 2024, we urge the Subcommittee to recommend the following funding levels for these agencies: Census Bureau, \$2 billion; NSF, \$11.9 billion; NIJ, \$50 million; and, BJS, \$60 million.

The PAA and APC are two affiliated organizations that together represent over 3,000 social and behavioral scientists and the over 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 NIJ and rely on data produced by the nation's statistical agencies, including the Census Bureau and BJS, 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 urge the subcommittee to support increased funding for the Census Bureau in FY 2024 above the Administration's request as recommended by [The Census Project](#). In FY 2024, 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 2024, funding recommendation (\$2 billion) that census stakeholders are supporting would enable the Bureau to pursue initiatives not only in the President's budget, but also additional activities recommended by census stakeholders, including:

- **The American Community Survey**—While the President's budget requests an additional \$10 million to improve how the ACS measures the sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) population, census stakeholders and data users in the public, private, non-profit sectors believe the ACS needs an immediate infusion of substantial funding to pursue other long overdue enhancements to the survey. These enhancements include increasing the survey's sample size, improving its non-response follow up operations, addressing steadily declining response rates, revising content, and making other methodological and operational improvements. An independent report issued in 2022 (and reissued in 2023) by The Census Project urges an infusion of \$100 to \$300 million to protect the ACS from further data quality deficiencies and take up a long list of activities to ensure the survey is accurately capturing data about the nation's increasingly complex population and households. PAA and APC support the report's recommendations and urge the Committee to provide the Bureau with additional funding to pursue necessary innovations to the survey's content, operations, and data products.
- **2030 Census**—The President's Budget proposes \$408.9 million, which is \$160.1 million over the function's FY 2023 funding level, to support 2030 Census preparations. As we are already a third of the way into the 2030 Census cycle, stakeholders are unified in their support for ensuring the Census Bureau has robust funding early in the decade to support preparations for the next decennial. Funding shortfalls during the last decade forced the Bureau to scale back strategic field tests—a decision that may have contributed to the less accurate counts of racial and ethnic populations, rural areas, and young children in the 2020 Census. Investing in the 2030 Census now will allow the Bureau to sustain essential capabilities and schedules and reduce the risk of requiring unplanned, additional funding in the peak planning years later in the decade. While the President's request proposes an increase to support 2030 preparations, our organizations urge the Subcommittee to scrutinize the Bureau's recommendation to determine if the funding level is sufficient to fully support activities that the agency must invest in now to ensure the future success and cost-efficiency of the 2030 Census.
- **Population Estimates**--The annual series of Population Estimates produced by the Census Bureau set the denominators for the Bureau's key demographic surveys, especially the ACS and the Current Population Survey, affecting federal funds distribution and key economic and health indicators. However, the Census Bureau's Population Estimates Program, which produces the estimates, has 33% fewer staff and 20% less funding in constant dollars than in 2004. This is untenable given the significant operational disruption in the 2020 Census and resulting differential undercounts of racial and ethnic population subgroups, renters, rural areas, and young children. The Population Estimates are a major opportunity to mitigate the consequences of those differential undercounts. A more robust Estimates improvement program at the Census Bureau would make consistent changes across all states, with greater outreach to states and localities

that have high-quality data to share but lack the capacity and resources to engage in the Bureau’s adversarial Population Estimates Challenge Program. Greater accuracy also requires a more flexible and collaborative approach to the previous Population Estimates appeals process, allowing local and tribal governments to submit a wider range of high-quality data to improve local counts than was allowed after the 2010 Census. State, city, county and tribal officials, as well as demographers, statisticians, and researchers support an expanded (and renamed) Population Estimates Improvement Program.

Although the President’s FY 2024 budget request recommends increasing funding for the Population Estimates Program (\$6.2 million above the FY 2023 level), the level falls short of what stakeholders have identified as the necessary level of support. The Bureau needs \$6.3 million in additional funding in FY 2024 for additional staff to modernize the Population Estimates Program, building on the new “blended base” approach that retains accurate census counts augmented by high-quality official data from states, cities, counties, towns, tribal governments, and other localities to help improve the accuracy of their annual estimates, and 5 translate the Base Evaluation Review Team’s research findings into more accurate Population Estimates. This long-overdue increase in Population Estimates Program funding represents a modest investment to ensure trillions of taxpayer dollars over the decade are spent fairly.

In sum, PAA and APC join other census stakeholders in urging the Subcommittee to provide the Census Bureau with \$2 billion in FY 2024 to support 2030 Census preparations; enhance the ACS; strengthen the Population Estimates program; and, enrich the quality and granularity of all census data sets.

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, and in particular the Directorate of Social, Behavioral and Economic (SBE) Sciences, which is the primary source of support for the population sciences within the NSF. The SBE Directorate funds critical large-scale longitudinal surveys, such as the *Panel Study of Income Dynamics*, which inform pressing policy decisions and provide 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 about 27 percent of all federally supported basic research conducted by America’s colleges and universities, including basic behavioral and social research. However, the SBE Directorate funds approximately 65 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), urge the Subcommittee to provide NSF with \$11.9 billion in FY 2024. This amount, which is

approximately \$2.4 billion above the agency's FY 2023 enacted level, aligns with the authorization level mandated in the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022 (P.L. 117-167).

The overall funding level we are recommending 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 2024 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.

Bureau of Justice Statistics and National Institute of Justice

After years of declining budgets, PAA and APC are participating in the Friends of Justice Research and Statistics coalition to raise awareness about the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) and National Institute of Justice (NIJ). Both agencies are important sources of data and funding for population scientists conducting research on topics such as prisoner reentry, the social and environmental dynamics of health and crime, and the effects of incarceration across the lifespan. The coalition's recommendations, which PAA and APC support, would provide BJS with \$60 million and NIJ with \$50 million in FY 2024.

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