

**Testimony on behalf of the
Population Association of America/ Association of Population Centers
Regarding the Fiscal Year 2026 Appropriations for the Census Bureau
National Science Foundation, Bureau of Justice Statistics and National Institute of Justice**
Submitted to the
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
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Population Association of America/Association of Population Centers

Thank you, Chairman Moran and Ranking Member Van Hollen 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 research overall. In FY 2026, we urge the Subcommittee to recommend the following funding levels for these agencies: Census Bureau, \$2 billion; NSF, \$9.9 billion; NIJ, \$60 million; and BJS, \$75 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 individual, societal, and environmental causes and consequences of population change. Population scientists, including demographers, economists, sociologists, epidemiologists, 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. They 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.

As you know, in FY 2025, the U.S. Census Bureau was flat funded at its FY 2024 level, \$1.382 billion. While this amount was approximately \$28 million above the level recommended by the House Appropriations Committee, it was about \$195 million below what the Administration requested and well below the \$2 billion that census stakeholders had urged Congress to provide. Further, and more alarmingly, the Bureau's FY 2025 amount is \$103 million below the agency's FY 2023 funding level. Census stakeholders are concerned that the agency's funding

trajectory is moving in the wrong direction as ramp up to the midpoint in the decennial census planning cycle.

PAA and APC urge the subcommittee to provide the Census Bureau with \$2 billion in FY 2026 as recommended by The Census Project. Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 is a crucial year in the ramp up to the 2030 Census in which preparations and costs begin to exponentially increase. In FY 2026, the Census Bureau will conduct the 2026 Census Test in six geographically and demographically diverse sites nationwide. The test is a critically important component of the decennial census planning cycle in which the Bureau evaluates new enumeration strategies and data collection technologies in the field. As we learned in the run up to the 2020 Census, shortchanging funding for testing at this point in the planning process introduces greater risk to a successful outcome. Adequate support for decennial census preparations now will reduce the risk of requiring unplanned, additional funding in the peak years at the end of the decade and improve the agency's ability to conduct an inclusive, accurate, and cost-effective count in 2030.

In addition to fulfilling its Constitutional mandate to prepare for the next decennial census, the Bureau needs robust funding to sustain and enhance its other operations and surveys, including the American Community Survey and Population Estimates Program, which monitor changes in the U.S. population throughout the decade and guide the annual allocation of over \$2.8 trillion in federal funding.

National Science Foundation (NSF)

For over 75 years the mission of NSF has been to promote the progress of science; to advance the nation's health, prosperity, and welfare; and to secure the national defense. 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. The NSF Directorate of Social, Behavioral, and Economic (SBE) Sciences funds approximately 65 percent of basic, university-based social and behavioral sciences research in the nation.

Understanding the implications of complex population dynamics is vital to the agency's mission, and in particular the SBE Directorate, which is the primary source of support for the population sciences within the NSF. Within its Research Infrastructure in the Social and Behavioral Science Program, the SBE Directorate funds critical large-scale longitudinal surveys, such as the Panel Study of Income Dynamics and General Social Survey, which inform pressing policy decisions and provide empirical evidence to help policymakers formulate effective decisions. The Directorate also participates in cross-cutting, interdisciplinary initiatives of interest to population scientists, such as the *Confronting Hazards, Impacts, and Risks for a Resilient Planet* initiative and the *Centers of Research Excellence in Science and Technology* program.

PAA and APC, as members of the Coalition for National Science Funding (CNSF), are alarmed by the Administration's FY 2026 NSF funding request, \$3.9 billion. We urge the Subcommittee to restore strong support for the agency and provide NSF with \$9.9 billion in FY 2026. This amount, while below what NSF stakeholders urged last year (\$11.9 billion), will ensure the agency can maintain its core mission and sustain ongoing research and research training commitments. Further, this overall funding level would enable the NSF SBE Directorate to

continue its support of social science surveys and a robust portfolio of population research projects.

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 \$75 million and NIJ with \$60 million in FY 2026.

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