



OFFICE OF GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS
1436 Duke Street • Alexandria, VA 22314
www.populationassociation.org • www.popcenters.org • 301-565-6710 x 1006



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PAA APC Statement on House Debt Ceiling and Spending Cut Proposal

As the principal professional societies representing the population sciences, the Population Association of America and Association of Population Centers wish to express their strong opposition to a proposal introduced on April 19, 2023, in the U.S. House of Representatives that would dramatically cut support for Federal discretionary funding, including all U.S. scientific research and statistical agencies.

The proposal, which is sponsored by the Republican majority in the U.S. House of Representatives, would reduce overall Federal discretionary spending by 22% in Fiscal Year 2024. Funding cutbacks of this magnitude would have devastating consequences for the population sciences.

The two primary scientific agencies that support the field, the National Institutes of Health and National Science Foundation, estimate that a 22% funding reduction would lead to 5,000 and 4,600 fewer awards, respectively. Fewer awards threaten scientific progress on critical issues, such as maternal and child health, reduced U.S. life expectancy, and societal and environmental implications of population change, which population scientists are uniquely trained to address. Further, the future of proposed NIH initiatives on rural health, rising midlife mortality rates, and socioeconomic disparities is jeopardized. Statistical agencies, including the U.S. Census Bureau, National Center for Health Statistics, and Bureau of Labor Statistics, would be stymied in their efforts to, among other things, revise Federal race and ethnicity data collection standards, enhance the quality and accessibility of data regarding health, income, and employment, and strengthen data confidentiality. We fear that these cuts would inevitably lead to reductions in existing awards, forcing scientists to eliminate staff, curtail surveys, and, regrettably, terminate training opportunities for the next generation of scientists.

In Fiscal Year 2023, Congress and the Biden Administration worked together to enact appropriations bills that robustly funded all Federal agencies. We recognize and respect renewed calls for fiscal accountability and efficiency. However, arbitrarily slashing funding across-the-board without regard for the immediate and long-term impacts on our nation's scientific workforce and the public that benefits from its productivity is irresponsible and reckless. We urge Congress to work together with the Biden Administration in a thoughtful, deliberate manner to not only lift our nation's debt ceiling, but also to sufficiently fund the Federal government in Fiscal Year 2024 and beyond.