

**Testimony on behalf of the
Population Association of America/ Association of Population Centers
Regarding the Fiscal Year 2025 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
The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen, Chair and
The Honorable Jerry Moran, Ranking Member
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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, 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 2025, we urge the Subcommittee to recommend the following funding levels for these agencies: Census Bureau, \$2 billion; NSF, \$11.9 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, the U.S. Census Bureau received \$1.382 billion in the final FY 2024 appropriations measure, an amount below both the agency's FY 2023 enacted level and the President's FY 2024 request. We are more than a third of the way through the lead up to the 2030 Census, which means funding should be trending upwards. Census stakeholders are

concerned that the funding trajectory is moving in the wrong direction if we want to ensure an accurate, inclusive, cost-efficient 2030 Census.

PAA and APC urge the subcommittee to provide the Census Bureau with \$2 billion in FY 2025 [as recommended by The Census Project](#). In FY 2025, 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 2025 funding recommendation 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:

- **American Community Survey**—The American Community Survey (ACS) represents one of the most significant innovations in the history of the Census Bureau. When launched in 2005 it replaced the once-a-decade decennial “long form” with an annual survey providing estimates for every community in the country every year on measures of ancestry, citizenship, educational attainment, income, language proficiency, migration, disability, employment, housing characteristics, and more. These data are extensively used by those in public, private, and not-for-profit sectors to allocate funding, measure shifting demographics, plan for local services, and to inform investments by businesses large and small. Sent to roughly 3.5 million addresses annually, it is the largest household survey that the Census Bureau administers.

Census stakeholders and data users 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. A [2022 independent report](#) (revised and reissued in [2023](#) and [2024](#)) from 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 Decennial Census Preparations**--The President's Budget proposes \$654 million, an increase of \$29 million from FY 2023 enacted levels, to support 2030 Census preparations. FY 2025 is a pivotal year, marking the midpoint in the decade-long planning process for the 2030 Census. In FY 2025, the 2030 Census will complete its first major milestone, the selection of an operational design. Further, important progress must be made towards planning the 2026 Census Test. To ensure the 2030 Census is conducted in an inclusive, accurate, and cost-effective manner, the Census Bureau needs robust funding now. Funding shortfalls at this point in 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 pursue in FY 2025 to ensure the future success and cost-efficiency of the 2030 Census.

- **Prioritizing the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP):** Policymakers, particularly in this volatile economy, need high quality, accurate data to assess the impact of government assistance programs on families and communities. SIPP is designed to achieve that goal, yet its funding has fluctuated routinely. In 2023, the Census Bureau announced its intent to cut the SIPP sample size permanently by 34 percent, alarming data users and stakeholders alike who believed this action would degrade the reliability and utility of SIPP data and impede their ability to make meaningful comparisons between demographic or geographic subpopulations. Data users and stakeholders argued that the Bureau should reverse course by restoring the survey's sample size and tackling the other big challenge facing the survey: declining response rates. PAA and APC are pleased that the President's budget proposes additional funding to restore the SIPP sample size. We urge the subcommittee to ensure this funding emerges in the FY 2025 CJS bill and to provide additional funding to that would enable the Bureau to pursue other necessary innovations, such as improving the accuracy of month-by-month data and creating an Internet response option.

In sum, PAA and APC join other census stakeholders in urging the Subcommittee to provide the Census Bureau with \$2 billion in FY 2025 to not only fund initiatives outlined in the President's FY 2025 budget request, but also to support additional activities that would benefit the ACS, 2030 Census preparations, and SIPP.

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 concerned that the FY24 level of funding for NSF fell far below our nation's competitiveness needs, leaving the agency to contend with an almost 8 percent cut in funding as compared to FY 2023. We urge the Subcommittee to restore strong support for the agency and provide NSF with \$11.9 billion in FY 2025. This amount, which is approximately \$1.7 billion above the President's FY 2025 request, aligns with the FY 2024 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. Increased funding in FY 2025 will also 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 \$75 million and NIJ with \$60 million in FY 2025.

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