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House Commerce, Science, Justice Bill Threatens Population Sciences

As the principal scientific societies representing the population sciences and federally supported U.S. population research centers, the Population Association of America (PAA) and Association of Population Centers (APC) are alarmed by funding and policy proposals embedded in the House Fiscal Year 2025 Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations. Specifically, **the bill recommends unacceptable funding levels and policy provisions that would impede scientific progress and adversely affect access to high-quality Federal statistical data.**

Census Bureau

Population scientists, including demographers, economists, sociologists, and epidemiologists, rely heavily on census data to conduct their research, research training, and to help inform evidence-based policy making in the public and private sectors. Population research centers use census data to facilitate interdisciplinary research on a range of topics including mortality, morbidity, aging, immigration, and population forecasting. Given how critical high-quality, accessible, and accurate census data are to our field, we advocate strongly for robust annual funding of the U.S. Census Bureau—especially during the decade-long ramp up to the decennial census.

The bill provides the Census Bureau with \$1.354 billion—an amount that is well below both the agency's FY 2024 funding level (\$1.382 billion) and the Administration's FY 2025 budget request (\$1.6 billion). As you know, Fiscal Year 2025 marks the midpoint in the decade-long planning process for the next decennial census in which preparations and costs should begin to exponentially increase.

In FY 2025, the Bureau will finalize plans and preparations for the 2026 Census Test, the first of two major field tests. The outcome of these tests will inform key facets of the 2030 Census. We know from the last decade how inadequate funding mid-decade resulted in the cancellation of key field tests, negatively affecting the conduct of the 2020 Census and leading to historic undercounts of Latino and American Indian/Alaska Native populations. As scientists who study population trends, these undercounts will have long-term scientific implications.

Adequate support for decennial census preparations **NOW** is necessary to ensure the Census Bureau is adequately prepared to conduct an inclusive, cost-effective, and efficient 2030 Census.

In addition to adequate funding, the Census Bureau also needs flexibility to fulfill its mission. The bill includes two problematic provisions, Section 559 and Section 621, that would not only unconstitutionally exclude undocumented immigrants from the apportionment base, but also diminish the quality and availability of census survey data, especially for small populations and areas, respectively.

In particular, we are wary of the uncertainty that Section 621 creates. The provision, which was just recently unveiled and has not been examined by relevant census oversight committees with input from the Administration, could adversely impact the Census Bureau's conduct of non-response follow-up operations. Further, we are concerned that the provision could complicate the Bureau's ability to ensure all geographies and population subgroups are well represented across its business, labor, demographic, and socioeconomic surveys as well as the decennial census. We urge the Committee to strike this language from the bill and to engage with census stakeholders inside and outside of Congress regarding the intent of Section 621.

National Science Foundation

The House bill includes a total of \$9.258 billion for NSF, which would represent a \$198.6 million or 2.2 percent increase over the FY 2024 enacted level. PAA and APC appreciate the Subcommittee providing the NSF with a small increase. However, the mark still falls below the FY 2023 appropriation by 6.2 percent, failing to restore the large and unexpected cut that the agency endured in FY 2024.

Our organizations recognize that the FY 2025 appropriations process is a challenging one in which the Committee must contend with tight budget caps. We call on members of the House Appropriations Committee to work together in a bipartisan fashion to draft a Fiscal Year 2025 CJS bill that restores funding for the U.S. Census Bureau and National Science Foundation and removes problematic policy provisions that would undermine the quality of the nation's essential demographic and socioeconomic data.