

April 20, 2017

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Chairman  
Committee on Ways and Means  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Ways and Means  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Culberson  
Chairman  
Energy and Commerce Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable José Serrano  
Ranking Member  
Energy and Commerce Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

We, the undersigned faith organizations and members of the Interreligious Working Group on Domestic Human Needs, urge you to increase funding for the U.S. Census Bureau in the House and Senate Commerce, Justice, and Science bills for Fiscal Year 2017 and Fiscal Year 2018. Our faith traditions compel us to care for those most in need, and providing adequate funding for an effective 2020 Census is a crucial prerequisite for federal policies and programs to respond to the needs of marginalized communities.

A failure to invest in the Census Bureau now will not only impact the effectiveness of the Census, but also cost taxpayers billions of dollars as the Census Bureau is forced to fall back on more costly counting methods of the past. These outdated methods tend to undercount communities of color, people experiencing poverty, young children, and rural residents, which decreases these communities' access to federal funding and proportional representation. If the Bureau does not receive increased funding to adequately prepare, we fear that these communities will continue to be undercounted and under-supported.

While we come from different faith traditions, we support an effective and equitable 2020 Census because:

- We share a belief in human dignity for all
- We know federal assistance plays an important role in ensuring all people can live with dignity by increasing access to affordable housing, health, and nutrition. The 2020 Census will determine the allocation of \$450 billion in federal assistance to state and local governments for the implementation of crucial programs.
- Census data is used to monitor and enforce important federal programs such as the Job Training Partnership Act, the Older Americans Act, and the Civil Rights Act.
- Undercounting communities reduces their political representation and decreases their share of federal funding and support, further marginalizing them.
- A poorly-funded Census will negatively affect all, but particularly those most in need who will go uncounted if the Census Bureau cannot adequately prepare.

Uncertainty about Congressional appropriations has already caused the Census Bureau to halt plans for important tests and put the 2020 Census at risk. The impact of cutting these crucial tests will be felt by marginalized communities. It is unacceptable that Congressional inaction would force the Census Bureau to water down the Constitutional requirement of conducting a decennial census and counting everybody.

In order to get activities and preparations back on track, the funding for the Census Bureau needs to be ramped up as it is for every decennial cycle. Last December, the Bureau was granted a modified anomaly through the continuing resolution (CR), which allows the agency to spend money at a faster, but not higher, rate during the course of the CR. In the final FY2017 funding measure, we urge you to provide the Census Bureau with a level of funding as close to the Bureau's request (\$1.634 billion) as possible. If Congress passes a year-long CR, the Census Bureau should receive a true funding anomaly to ramp up funding and prepare effectively.

FY2018 is a crucial year in which the Census Bureau will conduct an End-to-End test, the dress rehearsal for 2020. The administration's initial request of \$1.5 billion for the Census Bureau in Fiscal Year 2018 is woefully inadequate and \$135 million less than the FY2017 request. Congress should ensure that the Census Bureau has adequate resources to ramp up for the 2020 Census in FY2018, only two years away from our nation's largest peacetime mobilization.

Stakeholders including state and local governments, businesses, civil rights organizations, housing and child advocates, and research organizations have voiced the need for a modern and accurate 2020 Census. As an interreligious community of organizations, we join in to urge you to support an equitable Census as a moral obligation. Our faith traditions teach that all humans possess inherent dignity—that everybody counts—and therefore we believe that nobody should go uncounted in our democracy. Ramping up funding for the Census Bureau in the final FY2017 funding measure and in the FY2018 budget is crucial for fulfilling your Constitutional obligation and moral obligation for a fair and accurate 2020 Census.

Sincerely,

Bread for the World  
Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good  
Disciples Center for Public Witness  
Ecumenical Poverty Initiative  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
Franciscan Action Network  
Friends Committee on National Legislation  
Jewish Council for Public Affairs  
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger  
Methodist Federation for Social Action  
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd  
National Council of Churches  
National Council of Jewish Women  
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice  
Pax Christi USA

Sisters of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd  
The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society  
Union For Reform Judaism  
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries

CC: Members of the U.S. House of Representatives  
Members of the U.S. Senate