



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER
SCOTT M. STRINGER

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500

June 20, 2017

Re: Ensuring the Success of the 2020 United States Census

Dear President Trump,

We are writing to express our shared concern over the administration of the constitutionally mandated 2020 Decennial Census. The undersigned coalition of eleven comptrollers and treasurers serve as financial officers, charged with monitoring budgets and promoting the economic well-being of our respective states and cities. We know firsthand that an accurate and fair census is vital to the impartial appropriation of billions of dollars of federal grants, the fair apportionment of electoral districts, evidence driven policymaking, and a fuller understanding of our national identity. We believe your administration and Congress must move quickly to equip the Census Bureau with the necessary funding and leadership to conduct an accurate count of the U.S. population.

As you know, the Census effects policymaking across all sectors of government. According to the Brookings Institution, as many as 215 federal programs draw on Census data to allocate federal funding and grants. From Medicaid to housing subsidies, transportation dollars to early education funding, Census data helps deliver fair funding to every state and community. An inaccurate Census would have enormous repercussions. A study of the 2000 Census undertaken by the U.S. Census Monitoring Board estimated that for eight federal grant programs, the census undercount would result in a potential cost of \$4.1 billion over ten years for 31 affected states.¹ The recent resignation of Census Bureau Director John Thompson, coupled with the inclusion of the 2020 Census on the Government Accountability Office's "High Risk List," as well as the insufficient increase in funding proposed in your 2018 Budget, all raise serious questions about the administration of the 2020 Census.

While the Census Bureau is planning to deploy innovative, new data collection technologies in 2020, opportunities to test and refine their outreach strategy were lost when field tests were canceled for 2017. The Bureau's 2018 End-to-End Test is now especially critical for ensuring a reliable 2020 Census, making short term funding for 2017 and 2018 particularly important.

Inadequate funding for Census programs could also result in severe limitations to the American Community Survey (ACS), an important source of statistical information.

In recognition of the critical importance of the 2020 Census and concurrent statistical surveys like the ACS, we urge your administration and Congress to work together to ensure a reliable Census. That effort should include the swift nomination and confirmation of a qualified Census Bureau Director and an Under Secretary of Commerce for Economic Affairs, and the appropriation of adequate funding to conduct a thorough 2018 test and a successful 2020 Census.

As financial stewards of our respective states and cities, the Census is foundational to our work. The Census tells us who we are as Americans and how to target policy and programs to benefit our communities. It is essential to us – and all Americans – that the 2020 Census is accurate and unimpeachable. We hope you will act quickly to ensure the Census' success.

Sincerely,

New York City Comptroller Scott M. Stringer
California State Controller Betty T. Yee
Maryland State Treasurer Nancy K. Kopp
New York State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli
Oregon State Treasurer Tobias Read
Pennsylvania Treasurer Joe Torsella
Rhode Island General Treasurer Seth Magaziner
Utah State Treasurer David Damschen
Buffalo Comptroller Mark J.F. Schroeder
Los Angeles Controller Ron Galperin
Philadelphia City Controller Alan Butkovitz
Pittsburgh City Controller Michael Lamb

CC:

The Honorable Wilbur Ross, Secretary of the United States Department of Commerce

The Honorable Thad Cochran, Chairman, United States Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Patrick Leahy, Vice Chairman, United States Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Richard Shelby, Chairman United States Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen, Ranking Member United States Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen, Chairman United States House of Representatives Committee on
Appropriations

The Honorable Nita Lowey, Ranking Member United States House of Representatives Committee on
Appropriations

The Honorable John Culberson, Chairman, United States House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies

The Honorable José Serrano, Ranking Member, United States House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies

¹ The Census Monitoring Board was established by Congress in 1997 as a bipartisan board charged with monitoring Census 2000 operations and with reporting its findings to Congress.