



November 10, 2016

The Honorable Harold Rogers  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
H-305 The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nita Lowey  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
1016 Longworth H.O.B.  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Lowey:

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 to match the President's \$1.634 billion budget request in the House and Senate Commerce, Justice, and Science bills. 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 provide adequate funding for the Census Bureau 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 These outdated methods tend to undercount communities of color, people experiencing poverty, immigrants, young children, and rural residents, which decreases these communities' access to federal funding and proportional representation. If the Bureau does not receive increased funding in FY2017 to conduct necessary tests and prepare for 2020, we fear that these gaps in the Census will persist.

Some of the reasons our community of faith supports an effective and equitable 2020 Census include:

- The 2020 Census will determine the allocation of \$415 billion for the implementation of federal 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
- 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 in FY2017. These tests were intended to prepare the Bureau to accurately count communities that have been undercounted in the past, such as Native American reservations and non-English-speaking communities. 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.

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. Funding the Census Bureau at the recommended amount of \$1.634 billion is an important step in protecting and strengthening the 2020 Census.

Sincerely,

Bread for the World  
Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good  
Church World Service  
Conference of Major Superiors of Men  
Disciples Center for Public Witness  
Ecumenical Poverty Initiative  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
Franciscan Action Network  
Friends Committee on National Legislation  
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd  
National Council of Churches  
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice  
Office of Social Justice; Christian Reformed Church in North America  
Pax Christi USA  
The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society  
Union for Reform Judaism  
Unitarian Universalist Association  
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries