



March 6, 2018

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice (NETWORK) and our more than 100,000 supporters across the country, I am writing to encourage your continued support for additional investments in the 2020 Decennial Census for FY 2018 and FY 2019. Our Catholic social justice values compel us to care for those most in need and providing adequate funding for an effective 2020 census is a crucial prerequisite for doing so. The census is essential for understanding ourselves as a people and is a critical tool that enables federal policies and programs to respond to the needs of everyone in the country, especially marginalized communities.

I applaud Congress and the Administration for taking steps to shore up funding for the 2020 Decennial Census, particularly a \$182 million increase included in the FY 2018 Continuing Resolution (P.L. 115-124) and \$3.015 billion included in the President's FY 2019 budget request. Both efforts underscore the need to ramp-up funding significantly in the years leading up to the 2020 count. Nevertheless, preparations for the decennial census have been so hampered by funding uncertainty and shortfalls in the FY 2017 and FY 2018 appropriations process, that even these increased requests are inadequate to overcome the growing challenges to a fair and accurate census. Outstanding issues include preparation for address canvassing, marketing and outreach, and final end-to-end testing currently scaled back from three locations to one. **To that end, NETWORK requests \$1.848 billion for FY 2018 and \$3.928 billion for FY 2019 in the Commerce Justice Science Appropriations bill to support the volume of work needed.**

While the decennial census is a required function of the Census Bureau, it is the accuracy, reliability and fairness of the count that most concerns us. If funding in this last year is not sufficient to overcome the growing challenges and backlog of preparations and testing, a serious undercount could result. An underfunded, inaccurate 2020 Census will skew the projections of needed resources and programs away from the communities that need them most.

Historically, we have seen a disproportionate undercounting of people of color, young children, and renters. These groups have been underrepresented in previous censuses for decades. For some populations—for example, young children—the undercount has been getting progressively worse. We know that, in 2010 for example, 2.2 million children under the age of five were not included in the census results.¹ Now, additional populations — such as rural residents and older Americans—may experience new or increased vulnerability to being undercounted due to major changes in methodology, such as relying on the Internet as the primary way for households to respond to the 2020 Census.

Being hard-to-count can deprive people and their communities of equal political representation and their fair share of vital public and private resources. Local community leaders use census and American Community Survey (ACS) data to make decisions about allocating resources for community needs like

¹ U.S. Census Bureau (2016). U.S. Census Bureau (2016b) Investigating the 2010 Undercount of Young Children—A New Look at 2010 Census Omissions by Age, July 26, 2016.

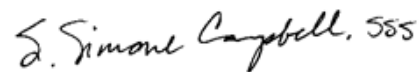
education, assistance for veterans, hospitals, and transportation. Census data can also help communities identify emerging problems that community leaders need to deal with.

NETWORK also opposes the recent request by the Department of Justice to include a citizenship question to the 2020 census questionnaire citing concerns around vote dilution. NETWORK opposes the DOJ request, particularly at this late stage of planning when the 2020 census has already been identified as a high risk program. Asking a citizenship question increases the risk of failure. Under the Constitution, the Census Bureau has an obligation to determine “the whole number of persons in each state” regardless of citizenship. Therefore, any citizenship question should be eliminated.

My Catholic faith teaches that all humans possess inherent dignity—that everybody counts. It is unacceptable that inadequate funding or the reinstatement of a duplicitous question on citizenship would render the Census Bureau unable to meet the requirement of conducting a decennial census that counts everyone.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S. Simone Campbell, SSS". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sister Simone Campbell, SSS
Executive Director

cc: Members of the Commerce Justice Science Appropriations Subcommittee