



Michigan League FOR Human Services

July 28, 2011

The Honorable Justin Amash
U.S. House of Representatives
House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Amash:

We are writing to ask you to restore funding to the Census Bureau when the full House considers **H.R. 2596, the Fiscal Year 2012 Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations bill**. The committee recommendation to cut the Census Bureau's budget by 25 percent jeopardizes vital data collections essential to data-driven policymaking. It is particularly vital in these years of rapid technological changes that are reshaping the American society and economy. The Census Bureau's work touches virtually every community and every economic and social sector in the nation.

The committee's recommendation of \$855.4 million (25 percent below the Census Bureau's FY 2011 spending level) could cripple the agency's ability to achieve significant savings in the future through innovative methods and greater use of technology. Specifically, the Census Bureau is likely to cancel the 2012 Economic Census, a cornerstone of the nation's economic measurements and source of data for the Gross Domestic Product and national income accounts.

The Census Bureau has demonstrated its capacity to streamline operations and reduce costs. Several programs are already scheduled for termination in FY 2012, and half the bureau's field offices are scheduled to be closed next year, including the one in Detroit. In addition, modest investments in required activities will help the agency to use its funding wisely, especially in conducting the 2020 Census and the ongoing American Community Survey. For example, continuous updating of the Master Address File throughout the decade—a proposed new initiative—would save hundreds of millions of dollars by eliminating the need for comprehensive pre-census address canvassing in 2019.

The committee mark for the Census Bureau will compel the agency to cut core programs. The cut of \$169 million from President Obama's request impairs the Census Bureau's capacity to conduct the 2012 Quinquennial Economic Census, required by Congress in 1954. The Economic Census provides core information on virtually all non-farm businesses and related data on business expenditures, commodity flows, and minority and women-owned businesses. It is a fundamental building block of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and national income and product accounts. Fiscal Year 2012 is the third year of the six-year 2012 Economic Census funding cycle. This benchmark census cannot simply be scaled back because public and private sector decision-makers would be left without a thorough picture of the nation's economic health and prospects.

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Abandoning plans for this important assessment of economic activity across diverse sectors would be foolhardy at a time when data are an essential component of the roadmap to economic recovery and progress and job creation.

Alternatively, the Census Bureau would have to eliminate key final components of the 2010 Census, such as the Count Question Resolution Program, under which local governments have challenged potential undercounts, and Census Coverage Measurement results, which will assess the accuracy of the 2010 Census and guide methodological decisions for the next enumeration. These efforts should not be compromised.

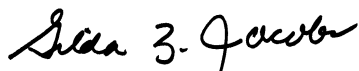
Other core programs at risk include the American Community Survey (ACS), the seminal source of annual socio-economic and demographic data about the nation used by decision-makers in the private sector and at all levels of government to allocate limited resources. For example, this vital resource monitors annual poverty rates and has been integrated into other estimation models, such as the Small Area Income and Poverty Data. For FY 2012, the Bureau requested \$5 million to test innovations in the American Community Survey, such as an Internet response option, that will contribute substantially to controlling the cost of the 2020 Census.

While difficult budget decisions must be made—a balanced approach must be considered. Wholesale cuts to the systems that inform decision makers at all levels of government cannot be eliminated or curtailed if accountability and wise use of existing funds are valued. These draconian cuts will compromise good government, informed policymaking and economic productivity.

We urge you to support sufficient funding to preserve key Census Bureau programs, as proposed by the president in his FY2012 budget request, and to reject any attempts to cut the agency's budget further in the full House.

Please feel free to contact me if I can be of assistance in any way regarding these issues.

Warmest regards,



Gilda Z. Jacobs
President & CEO