

May 29, 2014

Dear Members of the U.S. House of Representatives:

We urge your support for full funding for Census 2020 planning and the American Community Survey (ACS) in the FY 2015 budget. In addition, we urge your support for continuing to make responses to the ACS mandatory.

The undersigned groups represent residential and commercial real estate entities, as well as lenders who rely on accurate Census and robust American Community Survey information.

The House Commerce, Justice, and Science bill cuts at least \$105 million from the Census Bureau budget request, a 9 percent reduction in funding. Failure to complete planned research, testing and development of money-saving techniques such as Internet response could force the Census Bureau to fall back on older, more costly and less efficient methods in 2020. The newer methods could save taxpayers \$5 billion in the next decennial, but final testing of these innovations and selection of a design framework cannot be put off any longer in the bureau's Census 2020 planning cycle.

In addition, the Census Bureau will complete a comprehensive review in FY 2015 of questions on the ACS, part of the decennial census process and the bureau needs resources to prepare for the 2016 National Content Test. We would also oppose any amendments that would make response to the ACS questions voluntary. The ACS is the only reliable and consistent source for data annually -- not only at the national and state level, but also for smaller geographies, such as cities and rural towns. If the survey were voluntary, it is likely that the Census would have to spend more money and man hours to ensure data quality.

We urge you to continue your support for a fair and accurate Census 2020 along with continued funding for a mandatory ACS. Without current, reliable data, the nation will be forced to rely on outdated information that may or may not accurately reflect current market conditions. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Council for Affordable and Rural Housing (CARH)
Institute of Real Estate Management (IREM)
International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC)
National Affordable Housing Management Association (NAHMA)
National Apartment Association (NAA)
National Association of Housing Cooperatives (NAHC)
National Association of Realtors (NAR)
National Leased Housing Association (NLHA)
National Multifamily Housing Council (NMHC)