

October 5, 2021

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
Chair
Commerce, Justice, Science Subcommittee
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Ranking Member
Commerce, Justice, Science Subcommittee
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Matt Cartwright
Chairman
Commerce, Justice, Science Subcommittee
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robert B. Aderholt
Ranking Member
Commerce, Justice, Science Subcommittee
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Shaheen, Ranking Member Moran, Chairman Cartwright and Ranking Member Aderholt:

On behalf of the organizations listed below dedicated to improving the well-being of our nation's children, we are writing to you to request that the U.S. Census Bureau be funded at least \$2 billion, representing an increase of \$335 million from FY2021. This increase is necessary for the preparation and planning for the 2030 decennial census and includes an increase of at least \$45 million for the American Community Survey (ACS) and at least \$10 million for the "pulse surveys."

The needs of our nation's children continue to grow both as a result of the pandemic and of neglected investment for the past decade. Investments in our children deliver a tremendous return, improving their near- and long-term outcomes and healthy development, benefitting society and our economy.

Assistance for children included in President Biden's American Rescue Plan has the potential to cut our national child poverty rate by more than half. This plan represents the biggest opportunity to reduce child poverty in a generation, yet to fully understand where to target this assistance and assess the true impact of these investments on child well-being, we must have accurate data to help identify geographic disparities in child outcomes on the state and local level.

Preparation for the 2030 Decennial Census

In past decennial censuses, and indeed in every census demographic survey, young children are the largest age group missed. We were pleased that in 2020 the Bureau made important new efforts to count young children, including identifying which communities were most likely to miss many young children and undertaking communications campaigns to increase the share of households that included their young children when they responded to the Census.

From our work on the 2020 census, we know that the Bureau has to work now on evaluating the outcome of the 2020 census and start preparing for 2030, and that its efforts must include a focus on young children throughout the decade. The Bureau needs adequate funding now to build on the significant progress it made on counting young children in 2020 both for the 2030 census and for other surveys such as the American Community Survey.

American Community Survey

The ACS is a critical tool for tracking children's outcomes and is used by child advocates on the national, state and local levels. It is vital for producing the Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) and the Small Area Health Insurance Estimates (SAHIE), which are used by state and local advocates to provide data on child well-being within their state. An increase of \$45 million for ACS could increase its sample size by one million households, thereby greatly increasing its accuracy for small area data. An increase in the ACS sample size would be particularly useful for rural areas in the country where the current sample size in the ACS leads to less reliable estimates.

Policy makers and advocates need this data to understand child poverty, including disparities by race and ethnicity, geography, family structure, and other factors that are important in developing policy. For example, it can help improve outreach efforts for health insurance enrollment and other government initiatives, allocation of funding for a wide range of children's services, and government planning. Once those investments are made, this data can also help policy makers and advocates understand the impact of investments and finetune decisions. Decision makers should also consider reinstating the 3-year averages in the ACS. For a small cost (about \$1 million) these 3-year estimates provide many rural areas with very useful information in a timely manner.

Household Pulse Survey

When the pandemic hit, the Bureau recognized the need for timely data. Census Bureau products did not have the kind of information that federal and state policy makers needed, and the data was typically a year behind. They launched the experimental Household Pulse survey, which provides data just a few weeks after it is collected, on both the national and state level, giving policy makers and the public a clear understanding of what is happening and the ability to respond when needed. That study has lifted up the extraordinary impact of the pandemic on children's hunger, housing, education, and mental health. The data from the Pulse survey have also been used by businesses to make critical adjustments during the covid pandemic. Over the course of the last year, they have added questions that have focused on topics such as child hunger and child care.

We strongly support the continuation of this survey which will continue to be a critical resource for policy makers and child advocates as the nation struggles to come out of the pandemic and recession.

Sincerely,

Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Child Welfare League of America
Children's Health Fund
Coalition on Human Needs
Community Catalyst
Family Centered Treatment Foundation
Family Promise
First Five Years Fund
First Focus Campaign for Children
Generations United
Institute for Child Success
National Association for the Education of Young Children
National Child Care Association
National Children's Campaign
Partnership for America's Children
Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)
The Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
ZERO TO THREE

Alaska

Alaska Children's Trust

Arkansas

Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families

Colorado

Colorado Children's Campaign
PRW/Kids First (Boulder)

Connecticut

Connecticut Voices for Children

Georgia

GEEARS: Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students

Indiana

MCCOY (Marion County Commission on Youth, Inc.)

Louisiana

Agenda for Children

Maine

Maine Children's Alliance

Iowa

Common Good Iowa

Kentucky

Kentucky Youth Advocates

New York

Children's Aid
Citizens' Committee for Children of NY
Westchester Children's Association

North Carolina

NC Child

Oregon

Our Children Oregon

Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children
Public Citizens for Children and Youth

Rhode Island

Rhode Island Kids Count

Tennessee

Black Children's Institute of Tennessee
National Society of Leadership & Success DeVry University Southeast Chapter

Texas

CHILDREN AT RISK