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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

RICHARD J. KESSLER, STAFF DIRECTOR
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April 26, 2013

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
142 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard C. Shelby
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
125 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Mikulski and Ranking Member Shelby:

Thank you for your leadership and continued support for the U.S. Census Bureau (“the Bureau”), its critical statistical programs and its data collection activities. As you know, the Bureau is responsible for gathering vital economic and demographic data that private businesses and policymakers at all levels of government rely on for a myriad of purposes, including economic forecasting, planning, and investment decisions. Collecting all of this information and ensuring its reliability is a highly complicated task and requires great focus, active and sustained management, and adequate financial support. I hope the following recommendations and comments will assist you as your subcommittee deliberates on the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill for Fiscal Year 2014.

As you know, the 2010 Census was the most expensive decennial census in history, costing nearly \$13 billion, or about \$100 per housing unit. Additionally, for many reasons, the cost of conducting the census has, on average, nearly doubled each decade since 1970. If that growth rate continues, the 2020 Census could potentially cost \$25 billion; an amount that is unacceptably high. It is vital, then, that the Census Bureau identify and implement innovations and improvements, as necessary, to conduct the 2020 Census at a lower cost per housing unit than the 2010 Census while still maintaining high quality.

Research on new methods likely to result in a more cost-effective 2020 Census must be accomplished early enough in the decade in order to make an impact on both cost and quality and also to inform timely design decisions. For example, insufficient research and testing of the Field Data Collection Automation contract during the 2010 Decennial led to mismanagement and

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a major redesign of the Census very late in the process that, in the end, increased the cost of the 2010 Decennial by almost \$3 billion. 2014 is the last year of the Bureau's three-year research and testing phase for the 2020 Census and by September 2014, the Census will have developed an initial design for the next decennial. It is essential that the Census Bureau receives adequate funding in order to complete research and testing that will allow the Bureau to effectively test new enumeration methods (including an Internet response option), new processes to support field operations, and more cost-effective IT systems. Inadequate funding at this stage of decennial preparations may lead to delays in the research and testing results and ultimately result in poor planning and higher costs in later phases of the 2020 Decennial cycle.

As you work to finalize the Fiscal Year 2014 Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies appropriations bill, I strongly encourage you to ensure that adequate funding levels are continued so that we can avoid the operational and programmatic challenges that occurred during the most recent decennial census, unnecessarily raising both the survey's costs and the risk of a decline in the quality of data produced.

I appreciate this opportunity to provide my views and comments on this issue.

With best personal regards, I am

Sincerely yours,



Thomas R. Carper
Chairman