

July 30, 2019

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader McCarthy:

We are writing on behalf of the Children's Budget Coalition to urge you to support full and timely funding of \$8.45 billion for the U. S. Census Bureau in Fiscal Year 2020 (FY 20), including \$7.5 billion to conduct a fair, equitable decennial census that is successful in all communities and accurately counts our nation's young children. We also ask that there is robust funding for the constitutionally-mandated decennial census appropriated by October 1, 2019 and congress avoids unpredictable and often inadequate stopgap funding measures. We further urge you to prioritize children in your funding decisions so that the decennial census is not pitted against other essential programs serving children, not only within the Commerce, Justice and Science (CJS) Appropriations Bill, but also within other annual spending bills funding these important programs and services benefitting our nation's children.

The Children's Budget Coalition is made up of more than 80 children's advocacy organizations with priorities across a diverse range of issues, from child welfare and nutrition to housing and education. Together, we advocate for children to be a priority in federal budget and appropriations decisions so that we are properly investing in our nation's future. Underfunding the decennial census directly threatens this goal, increasing the risk of an inaccurate count of the nation's children—which would deny them appropriate representation in Congress and jeopardize fair funding for the federal programs in which they participate.

The decennial census already consistently undercounts children, missing more than two million young children in 2010. Children under five are especially likely to be missed if they live in complex or multi-family homes, live with grandparents, are poor, move frequently, are children of color, or linguistically isolated. Failure to count these and all other children successfully will rob them of the support they need to become healthy, productive American adults. Census data guide the allocation of more than \$800 billion in federal funding to programs that provide a broad range of crucial services to help keep our most vulnerable children and families from falling into poverty. Those programs include CHIP, Medicaid, Child Care and Development Fund, Foster Care, Head Start, Special Education Grants (IDEA), the National School Lunch Program, and WIC. Accurate data is especially critical for allocating federal funds to our children because we know that robust investment in early childhood development results in

improved school performance, better health, higher earning potential, and increased opportunities for parents to participate in the workforce.

As you work to enact the Fiscal Year 2020 annual spending bills in the near-term and avoid stopgap funding measures, it is imperative that you equip the Census Bureau to manage the growing number of challenges associated with delivering a fair and equitable census. Such challenges include an increase in the diversity of our populations, the complexity of living arrangements, the mobility of people in the United States, the availability of reliable broadband infrastructure, and a steady decline in self-response rates across all surveys. Under the 2019 Bipartisan Budget Act (H.R. 3877), \$2.5 billion is made available for the census outside of the spending caps, and we are concerned that this approach is insufficient to ensure both a successful census and healthy funding for other vital programs and services benefitting children. The CJS appropriations bill alone is an important resource for children, funding a wide range of programs aimed at keeping children safe, improving the juvenile justice system, fighting domestic violence, fostering child education through science, providing advocates for children in the welfare system, funding effective mentoring programs, and more.

Without full and timely funding for the census, we share concerns that the 2020 census will fall far short of the comprehensive, accurate count that is foundational to our democracy and paramount for our children and economic future. We urge you to adequately fund the decennial census at this pivotal time with \$7.5 billion and do so in a manner that this funding does not come at the expense of other critical programs and services benefitting struggling families and children.

Signed,
First Focus Campaign for Children