



September 8, 2025

House Speaker Mike Johnson
U.S. House of Representatives

House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Speaker Johnson and Leader Jeffries,

The U.S. business community is severely concerned by Section 605 of the Fiscal Year 2026 Commerce, Justice, Science (CJS) Appropriations bill, which passed the House CJS Appropriations Subcommittee on July 16, 2025. This policy provision would crater response rates to all Census Bureau surveys and result in the decennial census and the American Community Survey (ACS) counting barely a third of the country. It would drastically undermine the quality and availability of census survey data, especially for rural areas and small population groups, and have negative ripple effects across the U.S. economy.

Per Section 605: “None of the funds in this Act may be used to enforce involuntary compliance, or to inquire more than twice for voluntary compliance with any survey conducted by the Bureau of the Census.”¹ If adopted, this language would (1) prohibit enforcement of the mandatory response requirement on the decennial headcount and the American Community Survey (ACS), and (2) severely constrict the ability to conduct basic contact and non-response follow-up operations across all Census Bureau surveys.²

Section 605 would have an especially devastating impact on the decennial census, which historically must send substantially more than just two invitations to just secure self-response. According to data from the Census Quality Reinforcement Task Force, the 2020 Census had counted only 28% of U.S. households after the first two contacts, as of March 25, 2020, and no

¹ This policy provision is comparable to Sec. 621 in the FY25 House CJS bill.

² It may depend on the interpretation of the undefined word “queries.”

state had achieved even 35% coverage. This provision, by potentially cutting off inquiries after that point, including non-response follow up operations, would leave as much as two-thirds of the U.S. uncouned in the 2030 Census.

Section 605 would likewise undermine coverage in the ACS and the Current Population Survey, which usually require 2.5 to 3 follow-up contacts. Major business, economic, and demographic surveys that have multiple follow-up contact strategies would be similarly hurt. These caps on contacts with households, businesses, retail purchasers, wholesalers, manufacturers and others will have serious consequences on the reliability and accuracy of the many economic indicators produced by the Census Bureau, which move markets in the U.S. and around the world.

Congress should promote opportunities to secure reliable data through increasing response rates, not decreasing them. This will give American businesses the certainty to plan, attract, and execute future investments. With Section 605 limiting response rates, every other survey in the U.S. built on the population totals from the decennial count and estimates from the ACS will produce inaccurate data and insights.

Businesses use census data to promote economic development, identify potential customers, understand audiences and create jobs. The scenario under Section 605 would be disastrous for American business decision-makers and hinder economic competition, development, and growth.

Section 605 would wreak havoc on Census Bureau surveys, and by extension on most every other survey and research study conducted across the country. Therefore, the undersigned members of the U.S. business community urge the removal of this provision as you advance the FY26 CJS Appropriations bill.

Sincerely,

American Advertising Federation (AAF)
American Association of Advertising Agencies (AAAA)
American Planning Association
Association of National Advertisers (ANA)
Claritas
Insights Association
Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB)
Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce
National Association of Business Economics (NABE)
National Association of Home Builders (NAHB)
National Association of REALTORS®
Nielsen

CC: House Appropriations Committee