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March 17, 2016

Honorable Richard Shelby  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,  
Science, and Related Agencies  
304 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Barbara Mikulski  
Vice Chairwoman  
Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,  
Science, and Related Agencies  
503 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby and Vice Chairwoman Mikulski:

As you consider FY 2017 federal budget funding, we respectfully urge you to support the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS is a key program that businesses across America use to promote economic development, identify potential customers and create jobs.

The ACS data are required by federal law and are an irreplaceable tool for business and industry in every American community. There are simply no other sources of high-quality, detailed socio-economic information that are comparable across time and geography. The data allow us to analyze current and trending demographic and economic shifts, and to plan future investments accordingly.

The Census Bureau's request of \$251 million for FY 2017 represents a modest increase over current year funding. In FY 2017, the Census Bureau will continue to implement improvements to the ACS, including ways to reduce respondent burden and strengthen the quality and usefulness of data products.

Finally, we believe that making response to the ACS voluntary would greatly diminish the reliability and availability of ACS data for all communities, especially smaller jurisdictions and rural areas.

Thank you for considering our views as you make difficult decisions about how to allocate resources in the Commerce, Justice, and Science appropriations bill.

Sincerely,

American Planning Association  
American Seniors Housing Association (ASHA)  
CCIM Institute  
Council for Community and Economic Research  
Direct Marketing Association (DMA)  
Institute of Real Estate Management  
International Council of Shopping Centers  
Internet Association  
Marketing Research Association  
National Apartment Association  
National Association for Business Economics  
National Association of Home Builders  
National Association of REALTORS®  
National Automobile Dealers Association  
National Multifamily Housing Council  
National Restaurant Association  
National Retail Federation (NRF)  
Retail Industry Leaders Association