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**Testimony in Support of Fiscal Year 2022 Funding for the National Science Foundation, Census Bureau, National Institute of Justice, and Bureau of Justice Statistics**

**Prepared for the Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies**

**Committee on Appropriations, United States House of Representatives**

**Submitted by Wendy A. Naus, Executive Director**

**Consortium of Social Science Associations**

**April 29, 2021**

On behalf of the Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA), I offer this written testimony for inclusion in the official committee record. For fiscal year (FY) 2022, COSSA urges the Committee to appropriate:

- **\$10.2 billion for the National Science Foundation**
- **\$2 billion for the Census Bureau**
- **\$42 million for the National Institute of Justice**
- **\$50 million for the Bureau of Justice Statistics**

First, allow me to thank the Committee for its long-standing, bipartisan support for scientific research. Strong, sustained funding for all U.S. science agencies is essential if we are to make progress toward improving the health and economic competitiveness of the nation. The need for increased investment in science has become even more pronounced in light of the disruptions caused over the past year by the COVID-19 pandemic.

COSSA serves as a united voice for a broad, diverse network of organizations, institutions, communities, and stakeholders who care about a successful and vibrant social and behavioral science research enterprise. We represent the collective interests of all STEM disciplines engaged in the rigorous study of why and how humans behave as they do as individuals, groups and within institutions, organizations, and society.

Social and behavioral science research is supported across the federal government, including at the National Science Foundation and the Department of Justice. Further, federal statistics produced by the Census Bureau and other federal statistical agencies provide data needed to conduct social science research to inform policy decisions. Taken together, federal social and

behavioral science and statistical data help provide answers to complex, human-centered questions.

In short, knowledge derived from social and behavioral science research has made our population healthier, our democracy fairer, our nation safer, and our economy stronger, and not just in times of crisis. Without these sciences, policymaking on major national and global issues would not be based on evidence, and billions of dollars would be wasted.

## National Science Foundation

COSSA joins the broader scientific community in support of **\$10.2 billion for the National Science Foundation (NSF) in FY 2022**. The U.S. scientific enterprise, including NSF, requires stability, predictability, and sustainable funding growth, as well as federal policies that are patient and can tolerate a reasonable amount of risk in order to achieve the greatest payoff.

### Supporting All of STEM

NSF is the only U.S. federal agency tasked with supporting basic research across all fields of science. NSF supports about a quarter of all federally funded basic scientific research conducted at colleges and universities nationwide and serves as the largest single funder of university-based basic social and behavioral science research. Though NSF's Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences Directorate (SBE)—one of seven research directorates at NSF—represents less than five percent of the entire NSF research budget, it supports around two-thirds of total federal funding for academic basic research in the social and behavioral sciences (excluding psychology). As the primary funding source for the majority of our disciplines, stagnant or reduced funding for SBE has an outsized impact on the social and behavioral science community. As increased investment is made in NSF, we are hopeful the social, behavioral and economic sciences will see commensurate investments.

Further, while by far the smallest of the research directorates, SBE's impact is huge. The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine stated in its 2017 consensus report, *The Value of Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences to National Priorities*<sup>1</sup>, that "nearly every major challenge the United States faces—from alleviating unemployment to protecting itself from terrorism—requires understanding the causes and consequences of people's behavior. Even societal challenges that at first glance appear to be issues only of medicine or engineering or computer science have social and behavioral components."

### Keeping NSF Competitive

Authorizing proposals for NSF have surfaced in the last year, particularly proposals to create new directorates at the agency focusing on technology transfer and convergence research. The bills would authorize significant funding increases to achieve their goals, which is greatly appreciated and needed. COSSA hopes that any effort to embolden NSF to continue exploring the frontiers of

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nap.edu/catalog/24790/the-value-of-social-behavioral-and-economic-sciences-to-national-priorities>

science will be met with a commitment to maintaining the agency's defining characteristic, which is to be the incubator for basic scientific discovery across all areas of science. NSF's investigator-initiated, discovery-driven identity is what makes it special and has kept the American science enterprise at the leading edge of innovation. We look forward to working with the authorizing committees to develop a roadmap for NSF that keeps it at the upper echelon of innovation and urge appropriators to stay mindful of NSF's longstanding, unique role as part of the U.S. scientific enterprise.

## Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce

**COSSA requests that the Committee appropriate \$2 billion for the Census Bureau in FY 2022.** Social scientists across the country rely on the Census Bureau for accurate, timely, objective, and relevant data to better understand the U.S. population and to produce findings that help us shape policies that better serve the American people.

After a decade in which the Census Bureau received inconsistent and delayed funding, had to curtail essential research and testing of operations, and experienced significant pandemic-related disruptions, investments are needed to not only help the agency recover, but to also help it improve the collection and delivery of official statistics for the nation. A modest increase in funding in FY 2022 could help the Census Bureau recover from years of postponed enhancements, sustain and strengthen its mission, and pursue numerous necessary operational innovations. In March 2021, GAO kept the Census on its list of "High Risk" government operations, in part due to these factors.

These efforts are intended to provide the public and private sectors with more robust, granular and timely data for decision-making. COSSA supports efforts in Congress to provide the Bureau with greater authority for multi-year funding, beginning in FY 2022, to strengthen the innovations necessary to consolidate and integrate legacy surveys and systems into a new, more nimble data collection and dissemination model.

In addition, **COSSA calls on Congress to fully fund the American Community Survey (ACS) and maintain its status as a mandatory federal survey.** The ACS is the only source of comparable, consistent, timely, and high-quality demographic and socio-economic data for all communities in the U.S. As a component of the Decennial Census, the ACS is a "mandatory" national survey. The disruptions to the 2020 Census caused by the pandemic and natural disasters will likely have an impact on the quality of census data at smaller geographic levels, particular in rural areas. The Census Bureau needs additional funds to expand the ACS sample size (which has not been expanded since 2011) to produce more timely, granular data for a significant number of geographies and sub-populations than currently achievable. This would provide communities more timely data to fill in any gaps in the 2020 results.

## National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice

**COSSA requests that the Committee appropriate at least \$42 million for the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) within the U.S. Department of Justice's (DOJ) Office of Justice Programs (OJP).** NIJ serves as the research arm of the Department of Justice, filling an important role in helping the agency to understand and implement science-based strategies for crime prevention and control. It supports rigorous social science research that can be disseminated to criminal justice professionals to keep communities safe.

Despite our growing need for objective, science-backed solutions, over the past decade, NIJ's purchasing power has dropped by 36% due to the combined effect of declining appropriations and inflation. Compounding this pressure are Congressionally-mandated directives for specific activities, nearly always without the inclusion of additional funding to the agency's bottom line. Nearly 40 percent of NIJ's FY 2021 appropriation is directed to Congressionally requested research, not including a number of additional projects requested without allocated funding.

## Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice

**COSSA urges the Committee to appropriate at least \$50 million for the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) within OJP.** As the Department's principal statistical agency, the Bureau of Justice Statistics produces high-quality data on all aspects of the United States criminal justice system, including corrections, courts, crime type, law enforcement personnel and expenditures, federal processing of criminal cases, Indian country justice statistics, and victims of crime.

Despite a growing demand from policymakers, researchers, and other stakeholders for high-quality criminal justice data across an expanding array of variables, BJS has also faced significant budgetary challenges over the past decade. The agency's purchasing power has dropped by more than 37% since FY 2011 due to the combined effect of declining appropriations and inflation. This decline in funding has a direct impact on BJS's ability to release its data in a timely manner. Over the past several years, the release of numerous reports and datasets have been delayed—in some cases by several years. In addition, annually collected data has been combined into two-year reports, further increasing the lag between collection and public release. Data users' frustrations have been exacerbated by the fact that BJS's overall dissemination practices are antiquated and out of step with current best practices for statistical agencies. The agency's website has not had a significant update since at least 2011 and lags its peer statistical agencies in terms of usability, accessibility, and visualizations. BJS needs additional investment to ensure it has the resources to produce and release data in a timely manner, as well as to enhance its capacity to disseminate the invaluable data to stakeholders who rely on it.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer this statement. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require additional information.