



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 8, 2019

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COSSA Statement in Support of the Census Improving Data and Enhanced Accuracy (IDEA) Act (S. 358)

The Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA) supports the *Census Improving Data and Enhanced Accuracy (IDEA) Act* (S. 358) as introduced by Sen. Brian Schatz. The bill would prohibit the Department of Commerce from making any major change to the operational design of the decennial census that has not been “researched, studied, and tested” for at least three years. COSSA represents the social and behavioral science community, which relies on data derived from the census to advance scientific knowledge and produce valuable findings about the U.S. population that can be used to inform evidence-based policies.

The Census is a scientific enterprise: it is both guided by science in its design and operation and an invaluable source of data for researchers whose discoveries improve the lives of countless Americans. The Census Bureau routinely spends the years leading up to a decennial census carefully researching all proposed changes to its design and wording to ensure that they do not affect the quality of the responses received. This bill would formalize that longstanding practice and ensure that Census Bureau experts have the opportunity to fully evaluate the potential impacts of any major changes.

The costs of an inaccurate decennial census to the scientific community—and the American public—are incredibly high. The decennial census is an irreplaceable source of data for researchers in varying fields who use it to produce evidence that can inform sound public policies. In addition, information from the decennial census undergirds numerous other surveys and data sets at the Census Bureau and beyond; a problem at the source would have far-reaching implications across the statistical system.

The decennial census is a once-a-decade undertaking; the veracity of its data must not be compromised. The *Census IDEA Act* would help to preserve the integrity of the decennial census and the priceless data it produces.

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The Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA) is a nonprofit advocacy organization working to promote sustainable federal funding for social and behavioral science research and federal policies that positively impact the conduct of research. 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 science research enterprise. The COSSA membership includes professional and disciplinary associations, scientific societies, research centers and institutes, and U.S. colleges and universities.

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