



CONSORTIUM *of* SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATIONS

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**Testimony in Support of Fiscal Year 2024 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 Senate**

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

**Consortium of Social Science Associations**

**May 12, 2023**

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) 2024, COSSA urges the Committee to appropriate:

- **At least \$11.9 billion** for the **National Science Foundation**
- **\$2 billion** for the **Census Bureau**
- **\$60 million** for the **National Institute of Justice**
- **\$75 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.

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 affecting all Americans.

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## National Science Foundation

COSSA joins the broader scientific community in support of at least **\$11.9 billion for the National Science Foundation (NSF) in FY 2024**. 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.

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 eight 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.** 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 increases.

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.” We all observed first-hand the importance of understanding behavioral and social systems over the last three years as the world collectively worked to gain control of the COVID-19 pandemic. From mask mandates to vaccine hesitancy, the social and behavioral sciences have been shedding light on this uniquely human challenge and informing policy solutions at all levels.

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

**COSSA requests that the Committee appropriate \$2 billion for the Census Bureau in FY 2024.**

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 2024 could help the Census Bureau recover from years of postponed

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

enhancements, sustain and strengthen its mission, and pursue numerous necessary operational innovations.

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 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.

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

**COSSA requests that the Committee appropriate at least \$60 million for the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) within the U.S. Department of Justice’s (DOJ) Office of Justice Programs (OJP).** NIJ provides funding for research, development, and evaluation projects at institutions across the country to shed light on the most pressing issues facing our nation’s criminal justice system today, including the drivers of domestic radicalization, responses to the opioid epidemic, improving school safety, advancing forensic science, and fostering positive relationships between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

Despite our growing need for objective, science-backed solutions, over the past decade, NIJ’s purchasing power has dropped by 40 percent due to the combined effect of declining appropriations and inflation. Compounding the pressures of decreasing annual appropriations is the inclusion of Congressionally mandated directives for targeted research activities, often without additional funding. Providing more flexibility to NIJ would allow it to better direct resources to topics most in need of study and to pivot when research demands shift. An appropriation at the requested level coupled with increased flexibility is needed to inform DOJ’s efforts to balance issues of mass incarceration and racism in the legal system with a continued pursuit of effective strategies to prevent and control crime, support law enforcement, and advocate for victims.

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

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. **COSSA urges the Committee to appropriate at least \$75 million for the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS).**

Steady declines in funding have resulted in antiquated systems and, especially, staffing shortfalls, which can only be resolved by sustained investment. Despite a growing demand from policymakers, researchers, and other stakeholders for high-quality criminal justice data across an

expanding array of variables, BJS' budget has decreased by 30 percent, not accounting for inflation. Additional funding would allow the agency to modernize its data collection and dissemination systems, hire the necessary experts, and begin to develop the next generation of statistical products to keep pace with the ever-changing criminal justice environment.

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