

June 13, 2013

The Honorable Jeff Duncan  
116 Cannon House Office Building  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Representative Duncan:

I am writing regarding H.R. 1638, the Census Reform Act. As a librarian in the Federal Depository program, I am opposed to eliminating the various censuses targeted in this legislation. This data provides valuable, free information, not only to the citizens of South Carolina and the entire country, but to local, state, and federal governments so that they may assess the needs of their constituents. Furthermore, it provides information which is not available elsewhere to business leaders, entrepreneurs and researchers.

In addition to my responsibilities as the FDLP coordinator, I am also a reference and instruction librarian at University of South Carolina Aiken. As a frequent user of this data I am able to assist students, faculty, and citizens in this community with their government information research needs. Additionally, I work with clients of the South Carolina Small Business Development Center to help them access government information to prepare business plans or market analyses. Only last week, I was assisting one of their clients with her market analysis. The American Community Survey provided access to data which helped demonstrate the need for a type of healthcare service which is unavailable in our small community and would prevent patients from seeking treatment across the state line in Georgia. You, as a former small business owner, are aware of the challenges in beginning a new business. The ability to access demographic and economic data at no cost which might help these entrepreneurs better understand their target market is vital to ensure their future success.

According to your website, this legislation is in response to complaints by South Carolinians who feel these censuses, in particular the American Community Survey, are too intrusive. Living in the age of social media and electronic information and given the recent revelations regarding the government's access to private information of its citizens without our knowledge, asking questions about the size of your property or the distance of your commute seems trivial. Eliminating these data collection programs impact all Americans. If implemented it would severely limit the ability of all librarians to assist the constituents of the other 434 members of Congress with accessing timely demographic information. I hope you will reconsider moving forward with this legislation and look for alternative methods to resolve the concerns of your constituents.

Sincerely,

Kathy Karn-Carmichael, MLS  
University of South Carolina Aiken  
Gregg-Graniteville Library  
Aiken, SC 29801  
803-641-3320