

March 6, 2017

Representative Paul A. Gosar, DDS
2057 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-0304

Dear Dr. Gosar,

We, the undersigned organizations, are writing to express our interests in a specific clause contained in your proposed legislation, H.R. 482, the Local Zoning and Property Rights Protection Act.

On January 31, representatives of several organizations on this letter met with your staff to discuss the intended and, potentially, unintended consequences of the following provision in H.R. 482.

“Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no Federal funds may be used to design, build, maintain, utilize, or provide access to a Federal database of geospatial information on community racial disparities or disparities in access to affordable housing.

Members of our organizations are concerned that this language, if adopted, would preclude federal agencies from collecting geospatially specific demographic data by geographic area for housing in other federal surveys, including the decennial census, American Community Survey and various public health and farm household surveys. Although such statistics are not collected to administer housing programs exclusively, some of these and other federally funded surveys contain substantial information on the characteristics of populations at the small area level.

Your staff explained that the intent of this provision is very narrow. It was conceived originally to preclude the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) from maintaining the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) Data Tool—a database that has been used to enforce the AFFH regulation. However, as currently written, data users in the public and private sectors have substantial concerns that the language could be interpreted to preclude examining population characteristics more broadly. Therefore, we encourage you and your staff to alter this provision as H.R. 482 proceeds through the legislative process.

Thank you for being receptive to our concerns. We look forward to working with you to ensure this aspect of H.R. 482 does not generate unintended consequences for existing or new federal data assets and the use of federal statistical data to inform decision making by organizations, businesses and governments.

Sincerely,

AcademyHealth

American Anthropological Association

American Association for Public Opinion Research

American Economic Association, Government Relations Committee

American Educational Research Association

American Historical Association
American Political Science Association
Association of Population Centers
Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management
American Sociological Association
American Statistical Association
Association of University Business and Economic Research (AUBER)
Consortium of Social Science Associations
Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists
Midwest Political Science Association
National Coalition for History
Population Association of America
Society for Personality and Social Psychology
Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues
Southeast Michigan Census Council

Individuals:

Arlene Ash, Chief, Division of Biostatistics and Health Services Research, University of Massachusetts Medical School

Nancy Gordon, Fellow of the American Statistical Association

Svenja Gudell, Chief Economist, Zillow

Nancy López, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Sociology, Director & Co-founder, Institute for the Study of "Race" & Social Justice, RWJF Center for Health Policy

David Morganstein, V.P. Director, Westat Statistics Unit

Robert Parker, Fellow of the American Statistical Association

Lynn Wombold, Esri Data

For further information, please contact Katherine Smith Evans (kitty.smith@copafs.org), Mary Jo Hoeksema (maryjo@popassoc.org), or Juliane Baron (jbaron@aera.org).