

March 2, 2006 (Revised April 4, 2006)

Dear Senator or Representative:

As economists and social science researchers, we are concerned about provisions of the President's FY2007 budget that call for the elimination of the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), effective in September 2006.

The SIPP is the only large-scale survey explicitly designed to analyze the impact of a wide variety of government programs on the well-being of American families. As a longitudinal survey that tracks the same families over time, it provides researchers with unique information on the extent to which programs like Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Medicaid, Social Security, and unemployment insurance are successful in meeting families' basic needs and promoting upward mobility. It also tracks health insurance coverage, and provides more in-depth information than other government survey on work-family issues, such as maternity leave, child care, and child support.

The Census Bureau first fielded the SIPP in 1984, after over six years of careful design and testing. Since then, the Census Bureau and social science researchers have gained extensive experience with the survey and worked together to refine and improve it. The SIPP has served as the basis for thousands of academic papers and government and independent policy reports on poverty, income mobility, and the effectiveness of state and federal government programs. Over the last quarter century, hundreds of millions of public and private dollars have been invested in the development of the SIPP and the capacity to analyze its data. This investment will be lost if the SIPP is eliminated.

The total cost of the SIPP is about \$40 million per year, yet it provides a constant stream of in-depth data that enables government, academic, and independent researchers to evaluate the effectiveness and improve the efficiency of several hundred billion dollars in spending on social programs.

We urge you to fully fund the SIPP so that we may continue to use it to evaluate the effectiveness of public policy in promoting the well-being of America's families.

Sincerely,

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*SIPP Researchers Letter to Congress*

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